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September 2001

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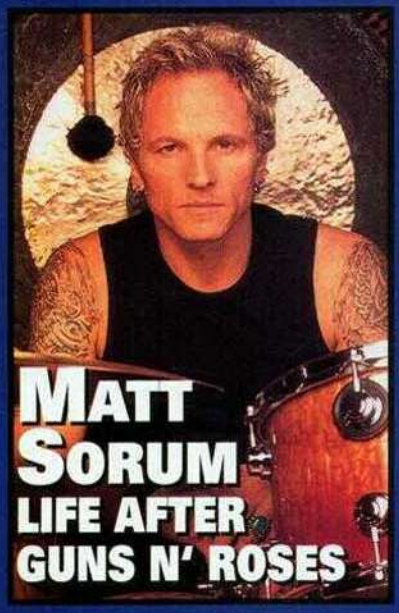

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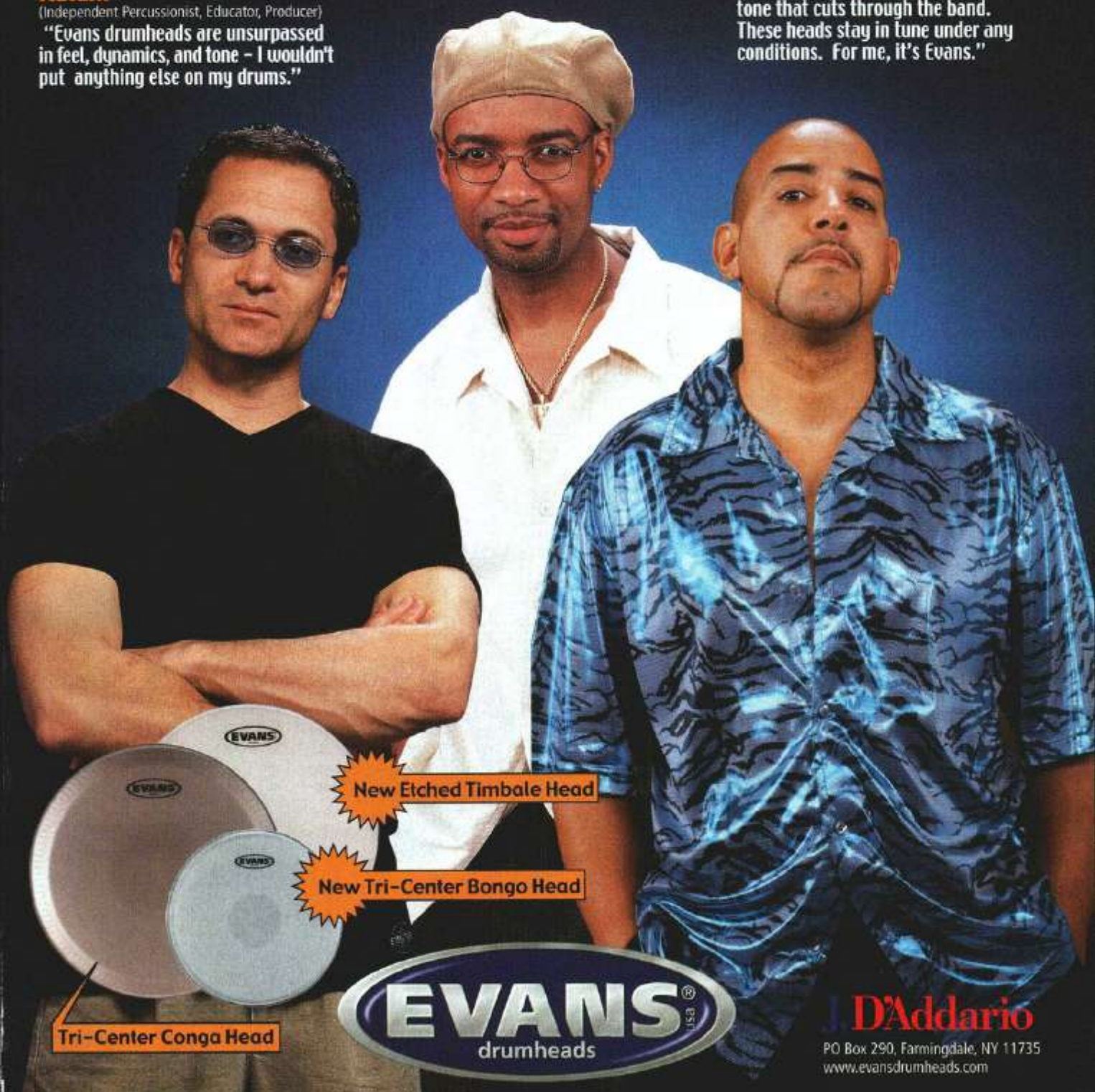

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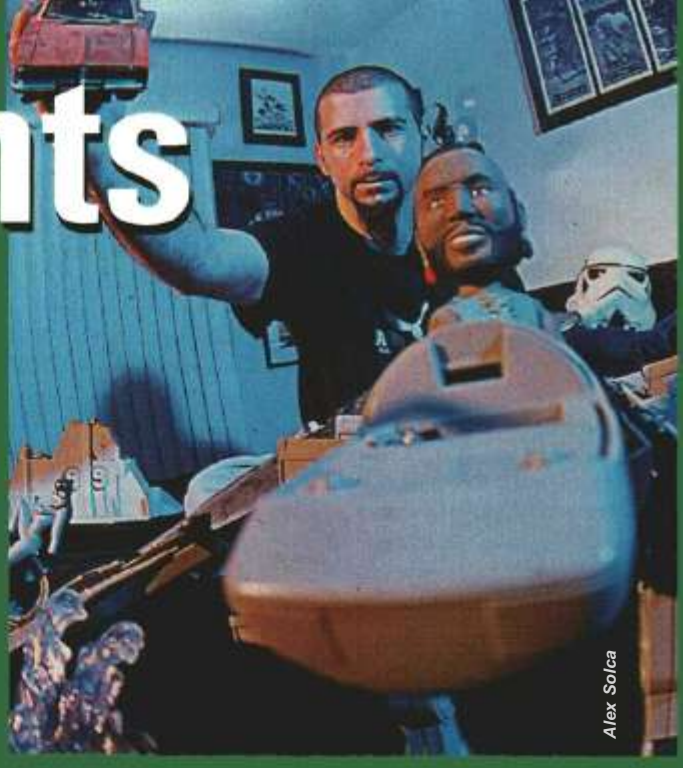

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In the August 2001 *MD,* John Riley's feature on the Moeller Stroke and Joe Morello's *Reflections* were announced for this issue. Due to editorial considerations, those articles have been rescheduled to appear in future issues.

Arm In Arm

You guys are great! In my last editorial ("Losing An Arm," April 2001 issue), I talked about being attacked by a 110-pound rottweiler and almost losing my arm due to the injury. After that piece was published, I received *hundreds* of letters, emails, calls, faxes, and even gifts from *MD* readers. The concern you all showed was overwhelming. No kidding, I get choked up thinking about it.

The news on my arm is almost all good. At the time of that editorial (about three months after the attack), the doctors weren't sure if I'd be able to play again. Now nine months have passed, and I *am* back on the drums. I've even played a few gigs with the band I was working with before the attack. (Get this: My bandmates actually carried my gear for the first couple of gigs. When does *that ever* happen?!)

As for my playing, well, I definitely lost a lot. After everything the arm had been through (four operations, little or no movement for two months), it was pretty weak. It also looked a bit withered and had a nice dent in it. Besides regular therapy, eventually I got the okay from the doctors to join a gym to build up my strength. And now, with the exception of one long scar and a couple of teeth marks, the arm is back to a somewhat normal shape.

On the downside, I have lost a certain amount of "touch" in my right hand. There's a slight "disconnected" feeling and a bit of stiffness in the forearm. But the docs feel it will continue to improve. Sometimes I'll be playing and the arm will sort of "spaz out," where I won't have total control over what I'm doing. It makes for some interesting fills! But hey, at this point, I'm just happy to have the arm. Oh yeah, I get a little weirded-out around big dogs now too!

Regarding all of those notes and letters so many of you sent, let me tell you, they certainly kept me thinking positively and also inspired me to not give up on drumming. Some of the notes came from drummers who had been through much worse than me—people who had lost limbs in accidents, who had been severely burned, or who had been wrestling with diseases that caused them to lose control of their bodies. Sure, these people are faced with adversity, but they wanted to let me know that they found a way to continue to play—that they *could* continue to play. Those notes, along with *all* of your encouraging words, helped me more than I can say.

Thanks, guys. You're the best.

Bill Miller

MODERN DRUMMER

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CONTRIBUTING WRITERS: Michael Bettine, Robyn Flans, Burt Korall, Rick Mattingly, Ken Micallef, Mark Parsons, Mike Haid, Robin Tolleson, Lauren Vogel Weiss, T. Bruce Wittet.

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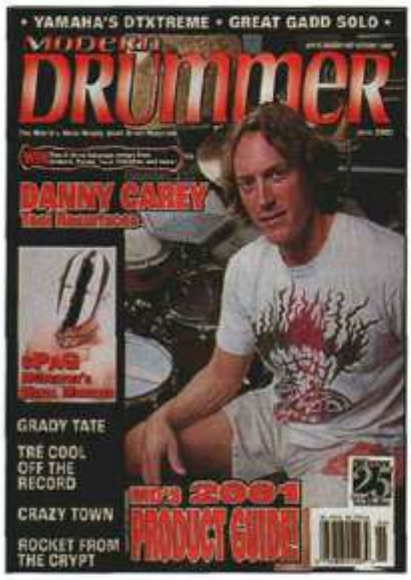

I loved your June cover story on Danny Carey. He is my favorite drummer, and my number-one inspiration to practice every day. I still can't get the hi-hat pattern from the song "Sober" right, but I'll keep practicing. Thanks for the awesome article.

Ryan Kearl
via Internet

I'm sure many readers were a bit befuddled and put off by Danny Carey's "weirdness." But like the man said, people are quick to label something as "weird" if they've never heard of it. I'm a long-time Tool fan, and I find their music more sophisticated and enlightening than anything available in the rock department today. Thanks for the issue of my dreams!

Andy Gibbs
via Internet

DE SIMONE ON JAZZ

As a jazz drummer, I want to express my appreciation of Mike De Simone's writing. His interview with Grady Tate in your June issue demonstrates that Mr. De Simone really knows how to talk to jazz players. This knowledge facilitates an interview in which Mr. Tate's views on quarter notes, dynamics, preparing to play with Stan Getz, and the hardly-ever-mentioned Osie Johnson are allowed to come through, instead of uninteresting talk about endorsements and technique.

Mr. De Simone's article of a while back on Sam Woodyard (one of my all-time favorites) is the only piece on Sam that has appeared in your magazine, to my knowledge. I know that players like Grady Tate and Sam Woodyard are not the ones who sell magazines, but they deserve *some* attention. I applaud Mr. De Simone for his efforts to keep jazz a part of *Modern Drummer.*

Kevin Dorn
via Internet

BECOMING A WORKING DRUMMER

Hats off to Mike Haid for his informative "Tips On Becoming A Working Drummer" in your June issue. His advice was practical and valuable on all counts.

When we start out playing, fame and fortune are always just around the corner. Of course, most of us never actually attain stardom. But not being a star doesn't mean you can't play drums full-time—and enjoy yourself doing it. I've played weddings and private functions as well as clubs, calling for a very large repertoire of different songs. So the gigs are definitely rewarding

AND THE WINNER IS...

Ron Spagnardi's June editorial "And The Winner Is..." was well said and long overdue. It seems like there's too much emphasis on speed these days, and not nearly enough on playing *musically,* with other people. I've played and made a living from drums all my life (I'm fifty), and I can't recall ever being hired for how fast I can play. Listen, play musically and from the heart, make the people around you sound good, and you'll always work.

Dave Coleman
Denver, CO

Art forms such as drumming evolve in numerous directions. The fact that some drummers have opened the door to new challenges—like the fastest hands or the fastest feet—should be applauded rather than discouraged.

Musicians have always been competitive. We are in constant competition for gigs, recording contracts, you name it. And drummers are always looking to see what the "new guy" is up to so that we can gauge where *we* are (or need to get to). So what if drummers have speed competitions? It doesn't necessarily mean that the groove has been forgotten or that musicality is being neglected. It isn't taking anything away from drumming; it's simply adding another facet.

Prince Randian
via Internet

Ron, you hit it right on the head! I've always had students who would come into the studio for a lesson and announce that they could play everything faster than me. My reply has always been, "Good. But does it swing?"

Butch Miles
via Internet

Those who want to make drumming a sport should be reminded that having the hardest puncher, fastest runner, biggest lineman, best home-run hitter, or tallest center on a team never guarantees a championship. You have to know the sport, and you have to know your role on the team. And then you have to get the job done.

Line up those speed demons and see who other musicians want to play with. I've yet to see any of the top musicians interviewed in *MD's A Different View* mention how much he likes playing with a drummer because of his speed.

I think that part of the problem is the fact that a great many of those who participate in these speed-drumming competitions didn't come to drumming through music. With them it's drumming first and music somewhere else down the list—if it makes the list at all!

Mat Marucci
via Internet

Continued on page 8

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from a musical standpoint. The money isn't bad, either.

It's great for young musicians to dream of stardom. But it's just as great to make a career as a jobbing drummer. Mike Haid's article is a perfect starting point.

Rick Bellanti
Methuen, MA

BILLY'S IN THE GROOVE

I'd like to commend Billy Ward for his fantastic no-bull#@$% approach to "Learning To Groove" in your June *Concepts* column. His advice regarding the technical aspects of confidence, consistency, and count-offs—as well as the diplomatic ways to manage them effectively—really hit home!

Also, thanks for including my picture to illustrate Mike Haid's killer article, "lobbing As A Career." I had nothing to do with the article, but it was a nice surprise. Ironically, I *have* been doing a lot of jobbing lately!

Mark Inneo
Toronto, Canada

LAY OFF GINGER

Your June issue was overflowing with class-A content. Danny Carey, Tre Cool, James Bradley Jr., Grady Tate, Michael McDonald, sPaG, Ruby Mars, a three-question rap session with Vinnie Colaiuta, *five* product reviews, and enough educational material to send anybody away much the wiser.

Unfortunately, all these great features got soured when I read Rick Apgar's narrow-minded *Readers' Platform* letter concern-

AND THE WINNER IS... (CONTINUED)

I have to admit that I have been guilty of the acrobatic playing scenario from time to time. I can't be reminded enough of my number-one responsibility, which is to be a musician. That means serving music without the ego. Thanks!

Kevin Ronkko
Dover, NH

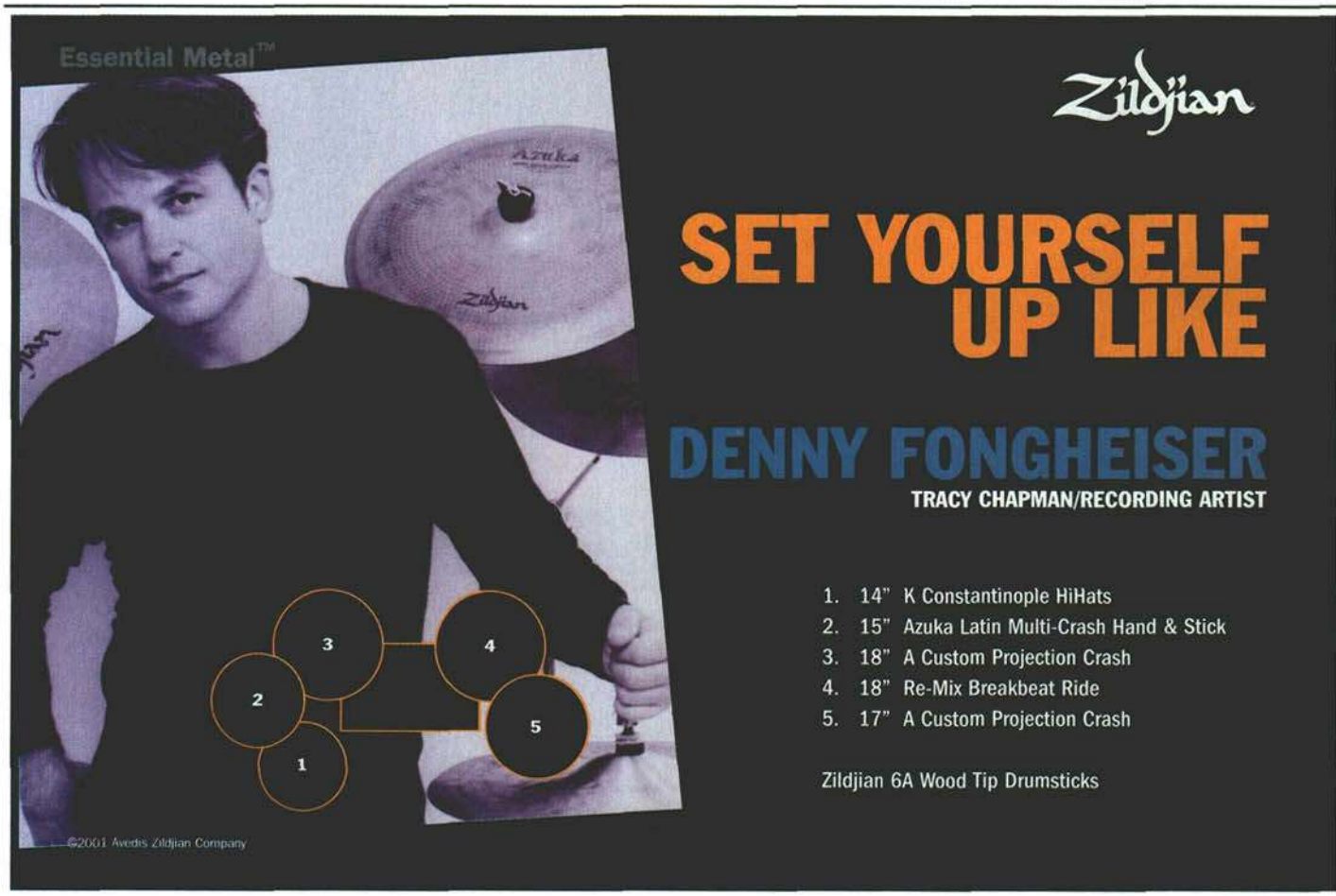
Your editorial couldn't have been more timely or on target. When and why did music become an athletic event? These World's Fastest Drummer contests seem like a cheap WWF-style marketing ploy for the Drumometer. But the real damage is that they tell young players that drumming is a contest and not a medium for self-expression. Thanks for using your print space to say something so obvious yet needed.

J. Gifford
via Internet

Even though you don't like drumming-speed contests, I hope you'll still publish the results from them. I'm interested to know how many beats per second some of the fastest humans in the world can produce. Knowing such information won't hurt my drumming, I promise.

Funny, but rudiments are another thing accused of getting in the way of musicality. Of course they do...at first. But ultimately the knowledge can set you free.

Bob Pettit
via Internet



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ing the Ginger Fish *Reflections* piece in the March issue. If Mr. Apgar doesn't like Ginger Fish, I wonder why he read the entire article, instead of just flipping the page?

Mr. Apgar says that *MD* should only feature drummers "that might interest someone over eighteen." I fail to see anything wrong with articles that would interest young players. Don't young drummers deserve a publication as good as *MD?*

Mr. Apgar's attitude is a perfect example of why it is impossible for *MD* to only feature "drummers we can all admire." Frankly, I would much rather have my children read an interview with Ginger Fish than have them exposed to Mr. Apgar's negativity.

Roger Benton
Brooklyn, NY

How refreshing it is to see names like Danny Carey, sPaG, and Tre Cool on the cover of *MD.* While Rick Apgar apparently feels that you are disrespecting "the art and heritage of drumming" by covering young drummers such as Ginger Fish, I applaud you. It's about time we started promoting the drumkit as a viable, exciting, and rewarding instrument for young, aspiring musicians.

Remember: The young drummer inspired to play by Ginger Fish today may someday become the next Dave Weckl...or at least a "loyal, long-term subscriber."

Dana Pellerin
Fresno, CA

I believe the goal of the *Reflections* column is for drummers (of *every* style, mind you Mr. Apgar) to discuss their favorite players. I thought Ginger Fish accomplished this very professionally, and with insight. I was surprised and pleased at his diverse influences.

What Mr. Fish said about Elvin Jones makes sense to those who have heard Elvin play, in light of his tremendous presence and control on the drums. I think Mr. Fish was striving for more than just, "He's good," or, "He's got really great hands." It's wrong for Mr. Apgar to be unnecessarily critical of these comments simply because he dislikes the artist interviewed and/or the band that artist plays with.

The "teenagers" who might have bought the March *MD* because Mr. Fish was in it will learn about his influences. Maybe, just maybe, they'll read one of the other articles—or perhaps listen to some of the players Mr. Fish talked about. In that way, Mr. Fish will be helping them to broaden their horizons beyond the music that he personally performs.

Chris Dembeyiotis
via Internet

While Ginger Fish's comments may not have been as technically detailed as Rick Apgar would have liked, I believe his comment on Dave Weckl's "Latin thing" sums it all up: Listening to Dave play made Ginger *feel good.*

How many of us got chills the first time we saw Virgil Donati play? What about that feeling we all get when we nail something

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that we've been practicing for weeks? That is why we play: because it makes us feel good to do so. It doesn't matter whether you're Dave Weckl, Ginger Fish, or a guy who only plays on weekends.

As for Mr. Apgar's comment on appealing to readers over the age of eighteen: Drumming is a diverse community populated by players of all ages and skill levels. Restricting *MD's* coverage to the giants of the industry would be unfair, incomplete, and boring. Music is like a blank canvas awaiting its image. Every drummer is a color, and even the smallest drop of that color leaves an impression.

"J"
via Internet

THANKS FROM AN ON-THE-MOVER

I'd like to thank you for the kind words written about me and my playing in the May 2001 *On The Move* department. I've received a lot of positive response from the write-up, and I've met a number of other drummers through it. Some have become good friends.

As drummers, we sometimes have doubts about what we're doing. We second-guess ourselves, and we wonder if the approach we've decided to take on our instrument is, in fact, valid. When your peers get behind you and give you some encouraging words to build on, it's like getting a shot of adrenaline. With that in mind, I'll continue to try to better myself at the craft, working towards the day when (hopefully) I will be featured in MD's *Up & Coming* column.

Steve Parsons
St. John's, Newfoundland
Canada

How To REACH Us

Correspondence to *MD's Readers' Platform* may be sent by mail:
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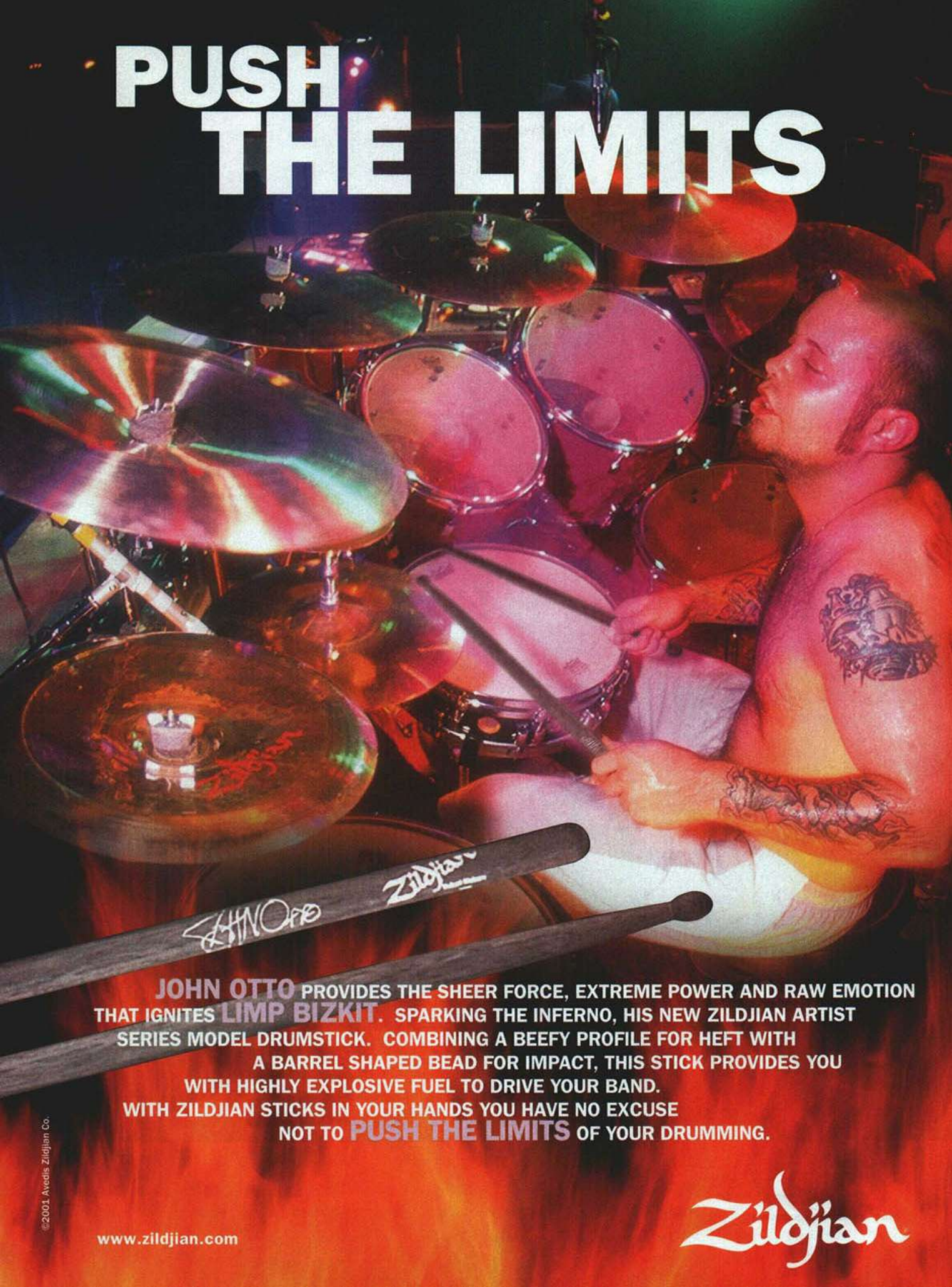
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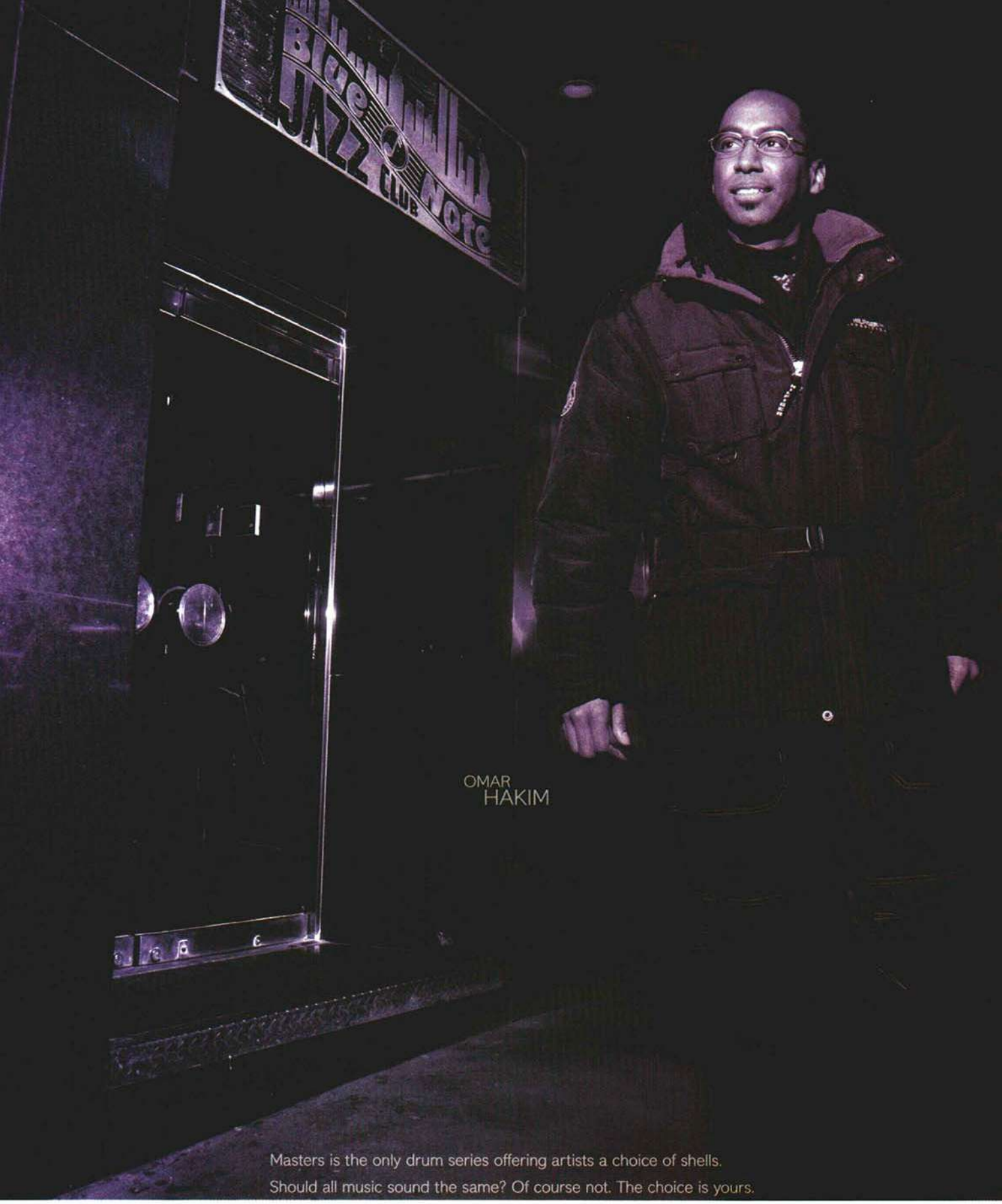

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Rob Ladd's DVD Drum Mix

Q Your drums had a truly remarkable mix on the Don Henley DVD *Live Inside Job.* Can you tell me how you got that sound, including what your microphone setup was?

Tim Davis
via Internet

A Thanks for listening to the DVD, and thanks for your question. As you know, there are several factors involved in getting a drum sound. Fortunately, on this and other recordings I've done, many of those factors were addressed by people much smarter than I am.

First, to get a good sound, you have to have a great-sounding kit—period. I've used Drum Workshop drums for more than ten years. Lately I've been using small toms (10" and 14") because I feel that they record better and have more tonal control. John Good at DW made sure I had toms with plenty of low end, but still with the small-size punch I was looking for. I put Remo Ambassadors on snares and toms, and PowerStroke 3s on the bass drum. Engineers rave about them!

As for mic's, we used a Shure SM 57 on the top of the snare, SM 98s on the toms, and a Beyer 88 using the May mounting system inside the kick. The overheads changed a few times; I'm afraid I can't recall exactly which ones we used on that date. I try to use the fewest number of mic's I can get away with for recordings—sometimes only three or four. This avoids phase cancellation.

That mic' setup is pretty standard, so the key to the "remarkable mix" you ask about must lie in the skill of our live engineer, Brian Ruggles, and in the production by Stan Lynch. (Besides being a great producer, Stan is one of my favorite drummers.) The recording itself was engineered by yet *another* drummer: Rob Jacobs. With all those drummers at the helm, I'd *better* get a good drum sound.

Craig Krampf Recalls "Hot Child"

Q I understand that you were the drummer on Nick Gilder's late-'70s hit "Hot Child In The City." I think that was a very strong and supportive drum track. Can you recall the equipment you used, and any details about the recording itself?

George Spelvin
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

A Thanks for your question. Preparing this answer brought back a lot of great memories. The story begins a little before the actual Nick Gilder sessions.

Shortly after I joined Flo & Eddie and The Turtles in 1974, I became a Camco endorser. They made up a beautiful natural-blond set for me. Tom Beckman, the president of Camco LA at that time, asked the shop manager to choose shells from the best of their stock, with the closest-matching wood grains. The set consisted of two 14x22 bass drums, 8x12, 9x13, 10x14, 12x15, 16x16, and 18x18 toms, and two snare drums: a 6 1/2 x l4 matching blond wood snare and a brass 61/2xl4. Camco hand-stamped each individual drum of my set on the inside, near the bearing edge, with the number 181.

Camco hardware was a little on the weak side, especially by today's standards. But the drums were quality, and they definitely had a great tone.

I joined Nick Gilder in the winter of 1977. At the start of 1978, Mike Chapman agreed to produce three songs for Nick, including "Hot Child." We recorded at Whitney studios in Glendale, California. We used their small room, which had a tight, slightly dry sound. Peter Coleman engineered those sessions, then went on to produce the rest of the album.

Peter and Mike were always experimenting and pushing the envelope with drum sounds and mic' techniques. If I remember correctly, in the studio they miked one bass drum and four toms: the 9x13, 10x14, 12x15, and 16x16. The snare was the 6 1/2" brass drum. The drumheads were all Remo coated Ambassadors. I used this same setup for Paul Stanley's solo record, after which the kit was basically retired. But I used the brass snare on Kim Garnes' "Bette Davis Eyes," so that drum was on two Number-1 hits.

We had worked on the individual parts and arrangements of the

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three songs a lot in pre-production, so we got the master take for "Hot Child" fairly quickly. No click track was used. Mike then said that they wanted to "tighten up" the bass before proceeding with any overdubs. The other guys went to the lounge at this point, but I've always loved everything about the recording process, so I stayed to watch and learn. They had bassist Eric Nelson fix a few notes, after which the bass and drum track sounded great to me. But then Mike said that now they were *really* going to tighten up the bass.

I watched Mike and Peter go to the tape machine and study the meters. Mike said, "Good. The bass is always ahead," referring to the notes they wanted to fix. I asked, "Why is that good?" Mike then explained that they were going to mark the tape with a grease pencil where the bass sounded, and then again where the kick sounded. Peter was going to hand-erase (run the tape by hand through the "record" head) that part of the bass note that was ahead of the kick note. They said that it was good that the bass was slightly ahead of the kick, because that way they could erase the initial hit of the bass without it ever being missed. The kick would provide the attack. They couldn't do this if the kick was ahead of the bass. Since the beginning part of "Hot Child" was very stark, with just bass, drums, a few guitar harmonics, and vocal, they really wanted the kick and bass to sound incredibly tight. (I'm currently producing a young band, and they get quite a kick out of hearing about recording tricks from "the old days"—before quantizing and computer recording.)

"Hot Child" was released in April of 1978 and hit Number-1 that November. We got the news while we were on tour opening for Foreigner. It was a great feeling for all of us to have a Number-1 record. Eventually, it became the twelfth single in history to reach "platinum" status. (For a single, "platinum" refers to two million copies sold, as opposed to one million copies for an album.)

Craig Krampf playing his Camco kit on tour in the late 1970s

Earlier that year, Camco had ceased operations. I was shocked when Tom Beckman said, "Craig, I'm getting out of the drum business. I'm going to get involved with a new little Japanese company called Roland. I believe they're going to do something." (What an understatement!) Tom invited all Camco endorsers to make one last run through the factory in order to stock up on spare parts, but I was out on the road with Nick so I missed that great opportunity. In the summer of 1978, right before we hit the road to promote the single, I became a Rogers endorser.

I still have most of my old Camcos. The wood snare was stolen in New York City after a concert. Peter Coleman asked to borrow the 16x16 floor tom for some Knack and Pat Benatar sessions, saying it was the greatest-sounding floor tom he had ever recorded. Unfortunately, that drum was stolen from the recording studio. Peter had a drum-maker build me a floor tom that matched the Camco drum closely, but it never had quite the same sound.

Would you like to ask your favorite drummer a question? Send it to Ask A Pro, Modern Drummer, 12 Old Bridge Rd., Cedar Grove, NJ 07009. Or you may email rvh@moderndrummer.com. We will do our best to pursue every inquiry.

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A Classic Quote From MD's Past

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Who Drummed For Beefheart?

Q Your October 1999 issue included a review of a Captain Beefheart album titled *The Dust Blows Forward—An Anthology.* In that review you listed Art Tripp as the drummer on a selection from the *Clear Spot* album. I have a copy of that original album, and the drummer is listed as "Ed Marimba." Were the names of the musicians listed differently from their real names as a goof, or did a different drummer really play on that album? Thank you for any light you can shed on this.

John Watts
via Internet

A Pretty much all of the players—just like, obviously, the Captain himself—used fake names on the records. Frank Zappa gave Captain Beefheart his name. Beefheart gave his players their names. Ed Marimba was, in fact, Art Tripp.

Dawsonisms

Q I've been enjoying Osami Mizuno's "Dawsonisms" series in your *Rudimental Symposium* department. I'm trying to locate the book these articles were excerpted from, but I haven't found it anywhere. Can you provide an address for Mr. Mizuno or the publisher of his book?

David McClellan
via Internet

A Osami Mizuno can be reached at: 3-11-8 Nishi-Ochiai, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo, Japan 161-0031.

Cracked Cymbals

Q bout fourteen months ago I bought a set of Paiste Signature Series cymbals. I recently noticed that my 16" crash is starting to crack. Is this something that would be covered by warranty? If not, is there a way to stop the cracking? Also, what can I do to prevent cracking on a new cymbal? I'm not a very aggressive player, and I do take care of all of my cymbals. I would appreciate any help.

Gidgetd99
via Internet

Jazz Terminology

Q I'm a bit confused on the differences between the terms "swing," "bebop," and *"jazz"* when referring to musical styles. Can you explain?

Travis Walker
via Internet

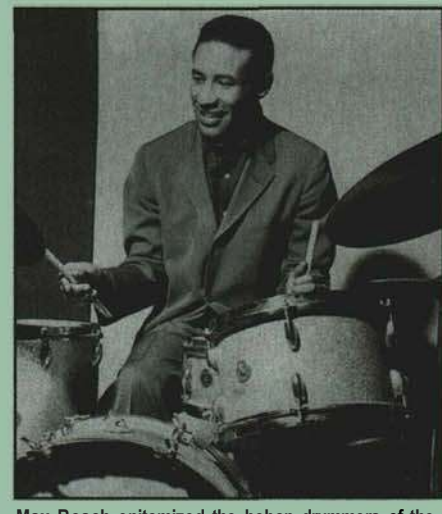
A Jazz has been a popular American musical genre from its birth in New Orleans at the turn of the century, through its migration north to Chicago and New York, and up to the stylings of the modernists of the 1960s and '70s. It began as what many call "Dixieland" music, and has evolved into a wide variety of styles—including spin-offs into what became blues, R&B, and rock. As such, many music historians feel that jazz is the only truly original American musical style. Early jazz drummers of note include Zutty Singleton, George Wettling, and the great Warren "Baby" Dodds.

With a style that influenced hundreds of other drummers since the early 1920s, Warren "Baby" Dodds is considered by many as the world's first great jazz drummer.

The term "swing" denotes a form of music that was extremely popular during the mid-1930s and on through the mid-1940s. Swing was basically dance music as performed by big bands led by Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, Glenn Miller, the Dorsey Brothers, and numerous others. Drummers Gene Krupa, Buddy Rich, Davey Tough, and Papa Jo Jones (among many others) are most closely identified with swing, and were the leading players of the day.

Swing bands ruled the music scene in the 1930s and '40s. Shown here is the legendary Gene Krupa, leading his own orchestra.

"Bebop" or "bop" was an outgrowth of jazz that occurred during the mid to late 1940s. The term was coined in New York by the proponents of a more contemporary style, led by artists such as Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, and Thelonious Monk. The primary emphasis was on instrumental improvisation, rather than vocal or even instrumental tunes with fixed arrangements. Drummers Kenny Clarke, Max Roach, Roy Haynes, and Stan Levy were among the leading players in this style. "Hard bop," "West Coast style," "soul jazz," and "avant-garde" are other genres that fall under the overall heading of jazz.



Max Roach epitomized the bebop drummers of the late 1940s and early '50s.

A Paiste product specialist Andrew Shreve replies: "Sorry to hear of your cracked cymbal. There is no way to effectively stop a crack once it has started. Some people try to drill small holes at the ends of a crack to prevent it from continuing. The problem is that the crack inevitably extends microscopically further than can be seen with the eye. Thus the hole isn't really at the end of the crack.

"You stated that your cymbal is fourteen months old. Our warranty on all Paiste cymbals is for one year from the original purchase date. This covers cracks that are caused by manufacturer's defects, which 98% of the time show up in the first few months of playing. These are usually cracks that are between the edge and bell. From your description, I cannot determine whether the crack in your cymbal is from a defect or not. I suggest you return the cymbal to us for inspection. We require a copy of the sales receipt and a call before you send us the cymbal so we can assign you a return authorization number. Call us at (800) 472-4783.

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3. Circular cuts under the bell. In these cases, the cymbal was mounted too tightly, or metal-to-metal contact with the washer or tilter was allowed.
4. Dents, bends, or warpage. In these cases, the cymbal was overplayed. If there was a defect, the cymbal would crack, not dent, bend, or warp.

"This should cover everything. Please feel free to call me if you have questions."

Rocker II History

Q My parents bought me a Ludwig Rocker II drumset in 1987.I sold it in 1993. I became serious about drumming again in 1997, and lately I've been curious about that old set. It was a five-piece kit, and I believe at the time it cost around $800.

What level of a kit was the Rocker II? How would its quality compare to kits of today? What were the shells made of? (I remember that the inside of the bass drum had a particle-board look to it.) Did the chrome snare it came with have a lining of wood inside? It felt like it weighed a ton, as did all the hardware. Your time and consideration is much appreciated.

Joe Mooney
via Internet

A Ludwig national sales manager Jim Catalano replies, "Rocker II drums were originally made in Ludwig's Monroe, North Carolina factory from 1984 through 1991. Your 1987 version outfit would have had a 4-ply poplar shell. The insides of the shells were painted with a coarse, speckled paint called Plextone. This sealed the wood from moisture and provided for good acoustical resonance. Most other drum companies used a similar process at that time. The snare drum also had a poplar wood shell, with a plastic 'chrome' covering.

"The Rocker II sets were originally made in a five-piece, conventional-size-tom outfit only. By 1986 or '87, however, 'power sizes' became available. The tom holder used was the original Ludwig L781, with an L-arm and ratchet system. The kits were outfitted with Ludwig 200 series Rocker hardware with single-braced legs.

"The drums had surprisingly good quality, and they sounded fantastic. When the outfit was first introduced in 1984 the retail price was $795. I believe it was around $895 by 1987. Rocker II's were phased out in the early '90s due to strong competition from Asian manufacturers. At that point, Ludwig started to import Rocker Series Drums (with a new design) from Taiwan."

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MEGADETH'S Jimmy DeGrasso Drumming Hero

A couple of years back, while Jimmy DeGrasso was in Europe playing drums with Alice Cooper, he got a call from an old friend, Megadeth's Dave Mustaine. The band needed a drummer, was DeGrasso up for the gig? "It was a surreal moment," he recalls, "to sit down at breakfast with Alice and say, 'I have to leave.'"

DeGrasso joined the popular speed metal band on the cusp of recording their 1999 release, *Risk.* "They wanted to do something adventurous, a huge departure from what they had done previously," he explains. "Unfortunately, I wanted to join Megadeth and play *Megadeth* music, as opposed to this experimental rock album." While *Risk* picked up some new fans for the Megadeth camp, it certainly alienated some old ones.

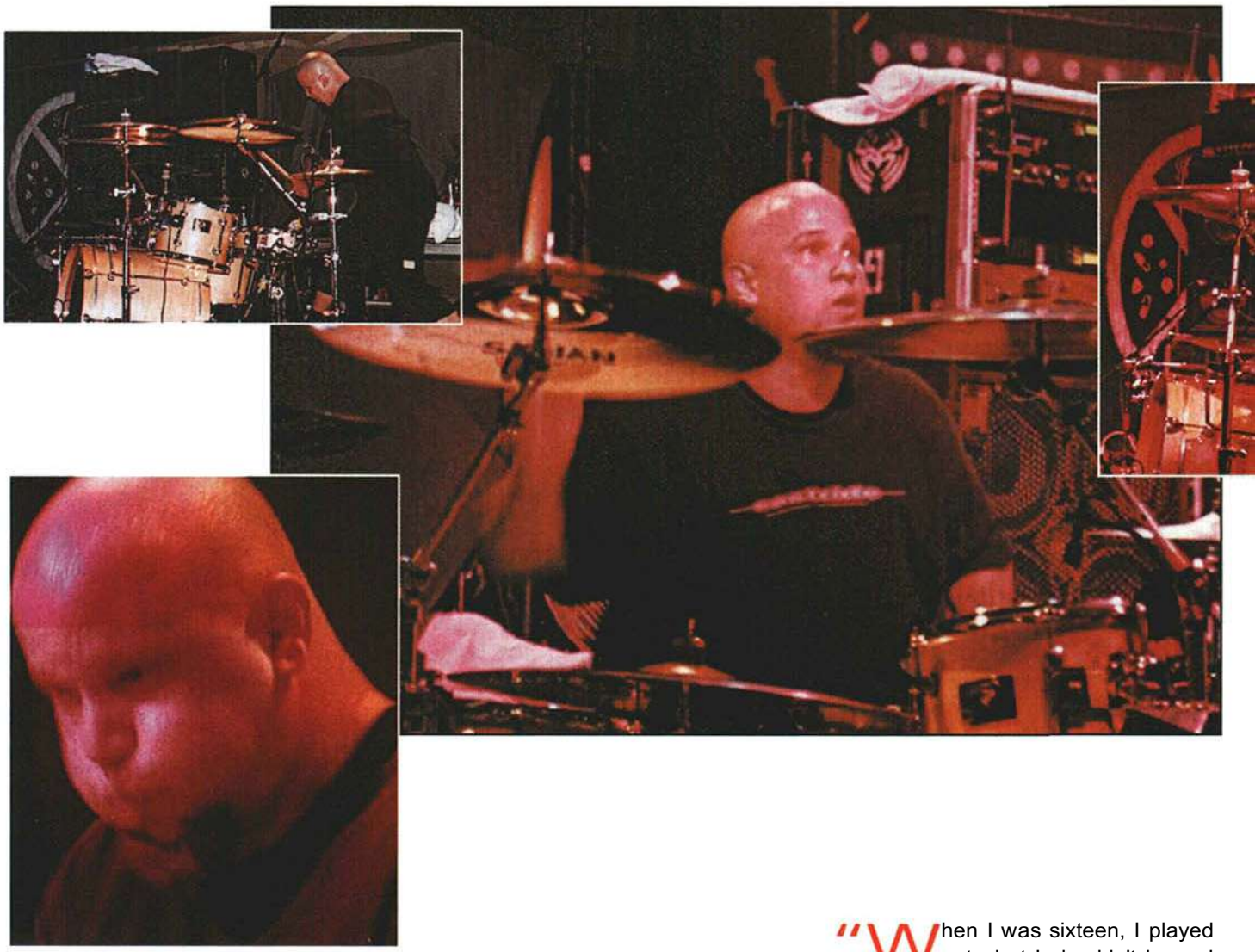
With that in mind, Megadeth dispensed with unnecessary studio gadgetry for *The World Needs A Hero,* their first new album in two years. "This time out," DeGrasso says, "we basically streamlined back down to what we are. It's metal: guitar, bass, and drums—no effects or loops. We just wanted to do what we felt like doing."

Most of the songs for *The World Needs A Hero* were written during soundchecks on the *Risk* tour. DeGrasso believes the band's unorthodox approach yielded exciting results that are easily heard on the record. "When you write songs at soundcheck," he says, "standing on that stage, you have your full sound. The guys are playing through big rows of Marshalls, I have this huge drum wedge behind me, and the bass drums are at about 135 decibels. There's a certain presence there that inspires you much more than when you're in a rehearsal space with padding all over the walls. I think that lent a live vibe to *The World Needs A Hero."*

While DeGrasso considers himself to be a fairly technical drummer, getting the right feel for the song comes first. "I play whatever hits me at that moment," he says. "There's a fill at the end of 'Return To Hangar' that's countering back and forth. I played that once in the studio. Then we went in the control room and our co-producer, Bill Kennedy, said, 'Can you do that fill again?' I was like, 'I don't even know what it was.'" Jimmy laughs, recalling how he said to Kennedy, "Play it back and let me see if I can figure it out."

DeGrasso and Megadeth are anxious to take their new record out on the road. "It'll be fun to play the material from this album live and see what works," he concludes. "That's where you find out where the meat of your album is."

Gail Worley



nonpoint's

robb rivera

On the attack

"When I was sixteen, I played out—but I shouldn't have. I played so badly," admits Nonpoint drummer Robb Rivera, "that it ended up being the most embarrassing, horrendous moment of my life." Rivera, a few years older and light-years wiser, is now finding himself on one of the biggest tours of his career, as his band joins Ozzy Osbourne and the boys on the 2001 version of the legendary *Ozzfest* tour.

If Rivera, a self-taught timekeeper, had a motto, it would likely be "Keep it simple." Robb believes in playing a simple kit in a simple style. He's honed that style throughout the years during Nonpoint's collective fine-tuning. But he pared down his kit out of necessity and, frankly, because he likes to be seen. "I began playing a four-piece because I wanted to be a part of the visual aspect of the band," Rivera admits. "Sometimes I set up my kit sideways so people can see me." Robb's four-piece

kit consists of a snare, a rack tom, a floor tom, and a bass drum. He rounds the kit out with three crash cymbals, a China, a ride, and a hi-hat.

Rivera describes his approach as "WWF." "I'm very physical when I play," he says. "I jump up on the kit. It's all about attack." At six feet tall and two hundred twenty pounds, that's an attack *worthy* of a wrestling ring.

With Nonpoint's newfound celebrity, Rivera juggles his passion for playing with a new phenomenon: fan adulation. Just as Robb looked up to influences like Black Sabbath's Bill Ward, Rush's Neil Peart, The Police's Stewart Copeland, Biohazard's Danny Schuler, and Metallica's Lars Ulrich, aspiring drummers now approach him to ask for advice about playing. "It's happened more than I ever expected," the drummer says. "I totally dig that they enjoy what I do. Hopefully I can be an influence to others in the future."

Mandy Strunk

Mike Clark

Proving It Again And Again

Ironically, jazzman Mike Clark will go down in history as the guy who cut one of the slickest funk tracks in history, "Actual Proof." Recorded in the '70s with Herbie Hancock's Headhunters, it featured a nimble Clark splitting up running 16th notes around the kit, his snare drum and hats dancing. Blame it on jazz, says Clark: "I stack that stuff up on the funk!"

That funk reputation hung with Mike Clark like a brown stain on a white shirt. His new album, *Actual Proof,* contains more evidence of his funk and jazz abilities. Recorded with an all-star team including guitar wizard Charlie Hunter and his old Headhunters comrade Bennie Maupin, the CD isn't gathering any dust. Clark has been touring it relentlessly, billed as The Mike Clark Prescription Renewal Band.

Today's funk and jam bands reflect Clark's jazzier sound. "Lately I see guys using smaller drumsets and an open sound," he remarks. "What I *don't* like is that they're going back to some inane grooves, stuff I thumbed my nose at in high school. I can understand how too many 16th notes would drive everybody crazy at this point. But the reason we didn't pursue the pre-boogaloo grooves in those days was because those beats *sucked."*

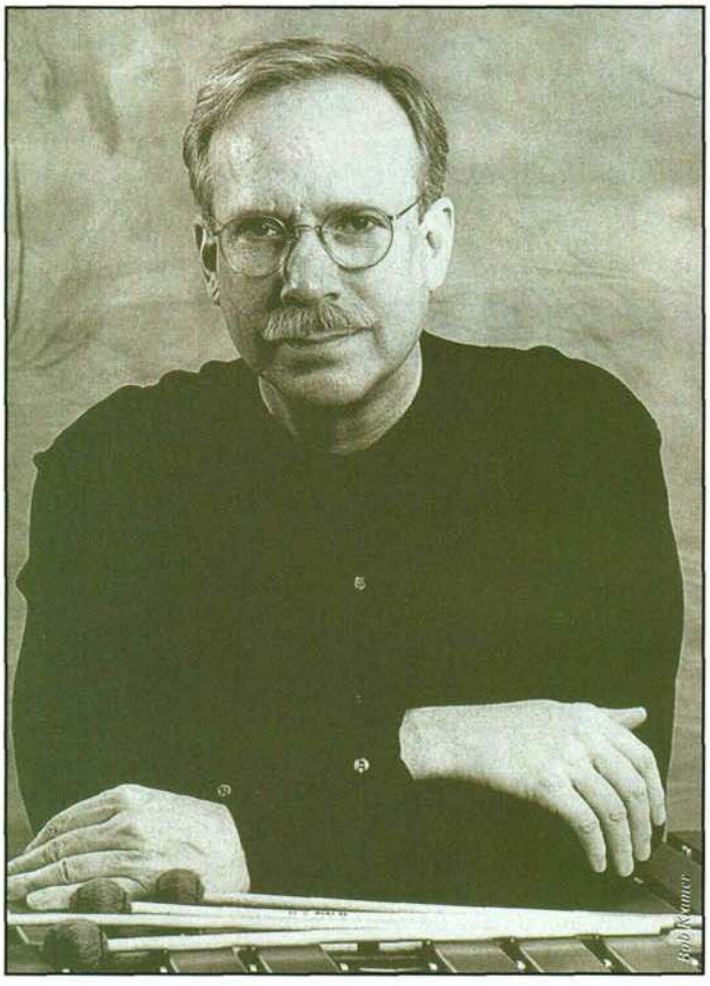
Explaining his Texas shuffle on "Bacon Phat" from the new album, Clark recalls, "When I was a kid, my friend Ray Torres played with Delbert McClinton and showed me about squishing your backbeats down a little more than you think you need to. When I was thirteen, this old singer turned around to me on stage and yelled, 'Put the *bacon fat* in there!' It's kind of like eating a steak: You could just chew it—or you could chew it 'til the *blood* comes out! And when I'm playing swing, I try to dig a chunk out of the ride cymbal so **it'll** dance in the fattest part of the groove."

Expect a new Headhunters album in the next year, and look for Clark on the road. He's barely had time to drop in at Drummers Collective for coffee, forget about teaching. "It's because I'm gigging, man," he exclaims. "I'm *gigging* and I'm *digging* it!"

T. Bruce Wittet

Gary Burton

A Fifty-Year Vibe



In 1999, as Gary Burton was celebrating his fiftieth year as a vibraphonist, the vibraphone itself turned seventy-five years old. That same year, two legendary vibes players died: Milt ("Bags") Jackson and Red Norvo. Burton felt the time was right to pay tribute to the instrument and the players who pioneered jazz vibraphone. The result is his recent album on Concord, *For Hamp, Red, Bags, And Cat.*

"Lionel Hampton really popularized the instrument and made people take it seriously," Burton says. "Without Hamp, the vibraphone might have just passed out of history as some kind of experiment with mallet instruments. Red Norvo started as a xylophonist and marimbist and didn't pick up vibes until 1943, which was the year I was born. He brought a sophistication and finesse to the instrument.

"I've always felt that Milt was the single most influential vibraphonist in the instrument's history. He made the vibraphone sound more expressive by switching to softer mallets, using a slow vibrato, and using more legato phrasing. Cal Tjader's contribution was not so much for his vibraphone playing but for pioneering Latin jazz. But he made a big contribution in terms of showing that the vibraphone is not just a jazz instrument."

The album includes tunes associated with all four players. Burton uses elements of each vibraphonist's style, such as Jackson's blues influence, Hampton's exuberant swing, Tjader's sensuous Latin groove, and Norvo's sophistication. But Burton never merely imitates; he makes each tune his own and shows why many consider *him* the most significant vibes player of all time.

Lewis Nash handled the drumming on the straight-ahead jazz tunes. Horacio Hernandez and percussionist Luis Quintero took over for the Latin-flavored tracks. "This was the first time I played with Lewis, but it felt as if we had been playing together for years," Burton says. "Horacio had a great balance between Latin and jazz that was perfect for Cal's music. Luis had an amazing ability to picture the right sound for each track, overdubbing four or five percussion parts. It was so much more than I expected, and I was very impressed."

Rick Mattingly

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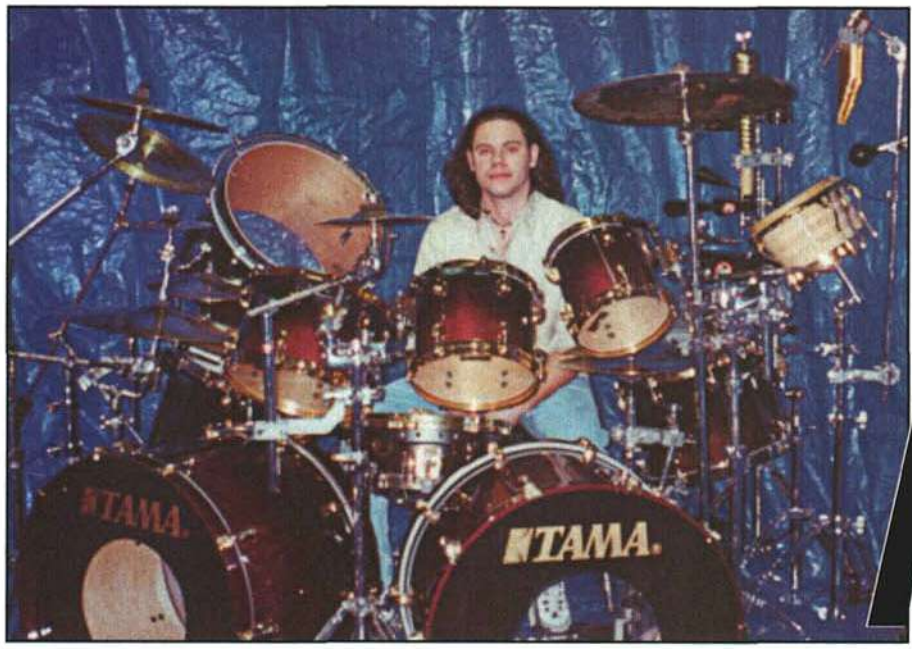

Hal Aponte

The Coming Of The Ice Age

Prog-rock drummer Hal Aponte is riding high on the success of his latest recording with Magna Carta recording artists Ice Age, *Liberation.* The group is breaking new ground in the prog arena, and Aponte's solid melodic drumming powers the album with dynamics and articulation attentive to the arrangements. But it's not easy fighting the stereotype of technical prog-rockers, says the drummer.

"People tend to compare anything remotely resembling prog to Dream Theater," Aponte opines. "When Dream Theater were coming up, they were compared to Rush. When Rush first came up, they were compared to Led Zeppelin. I guess it's sort of a revolving door. Sometimes people are so close-minded that they only hear what they want. You could release an album with no instruments except for whistles and kazoos, and still there would be some kid in a Dream Theater shirt saying, 'I heard Portnoy do that before.' Who knows, maybe he has, but we can only play what we feel. If that's what people hear, great. If it's not, that's great too."

Beyond drumming, Hal contributes lyrics to *Liberation.* "I enjoy writing lyrics," the rhythmatist offers. "I think it's very therapeutic. Josh Pincus, our keyboard/vocalist, is the main lyricist in the band. He's an incredible writer, so I tend to leave that area to him. I don't like to disrupt a working formula. But whenever there's an overload of work to be done lyrically, or if I have a strong idea, I'll introduce my lyrics to the band.

"My role in the *instrumental* side of songwriting is very important," Hal adds. "We tend to write a lot of our material together in the studio. We feed really well off of each other's playing. That tends to take the music in a direction that none of us expected. For instance, on our first album, *The Great Divide,* 'Perpetual Child' was written around a particular drum exercise I had come up with. It's easier for us to work as a unit, because things just seem to fall into place."

Aponte's short-term goal as a drummer is to become more musical and introduce more tones and textures into his playing, while his long-term goal is to learn total control of independent rhythms. He would also like to form his own fusion band one day. As for the future of Ice Age, the drummer states optimistically, "We would like to take our music as far as we can. We have a lot of things going for us, and I hope we can make a bigger impact on the music scene. I think because we concentrate a lot more on melodies than on blazing chops, our songs will reach a wider audience."

Mike Haid

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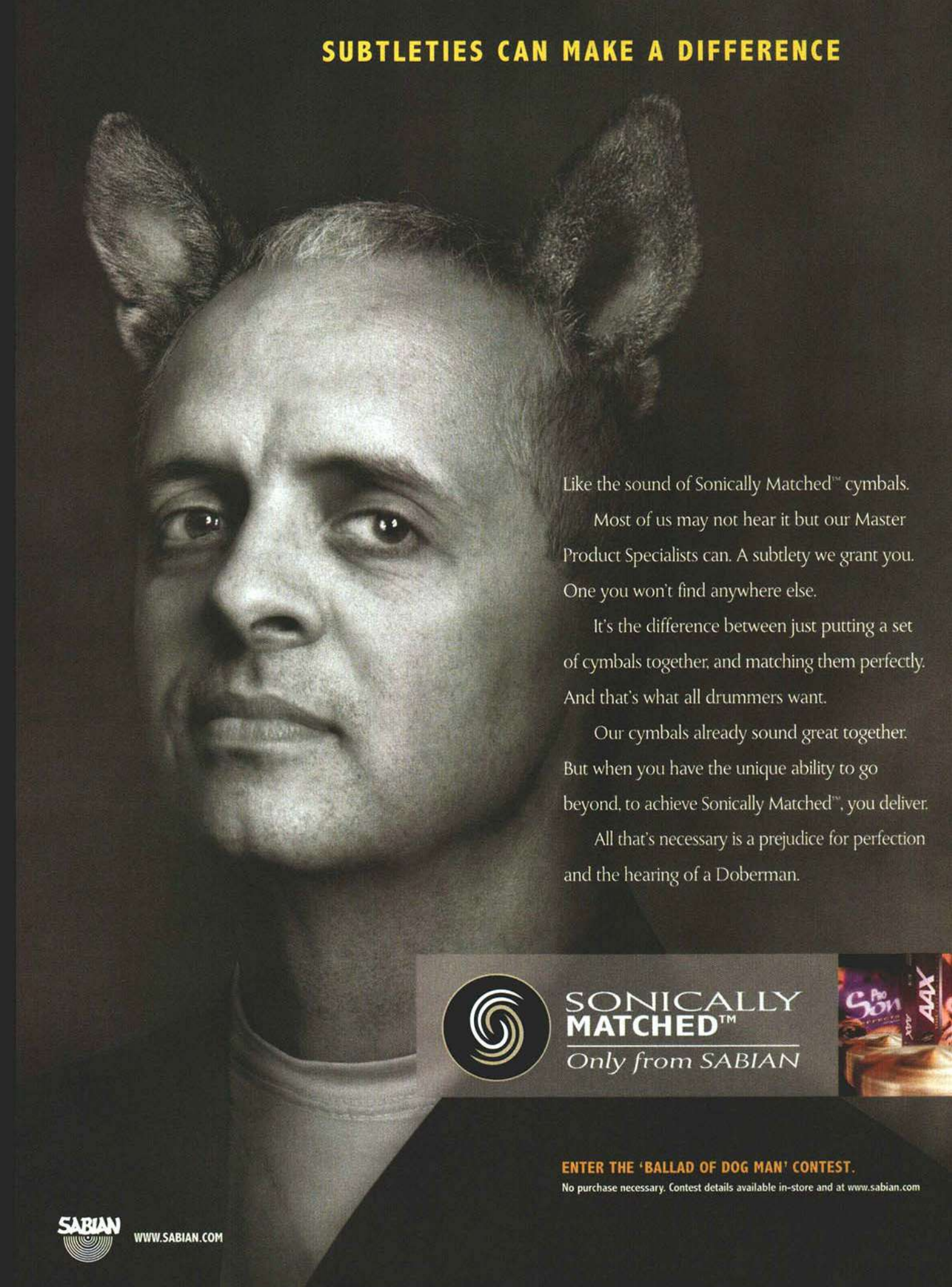

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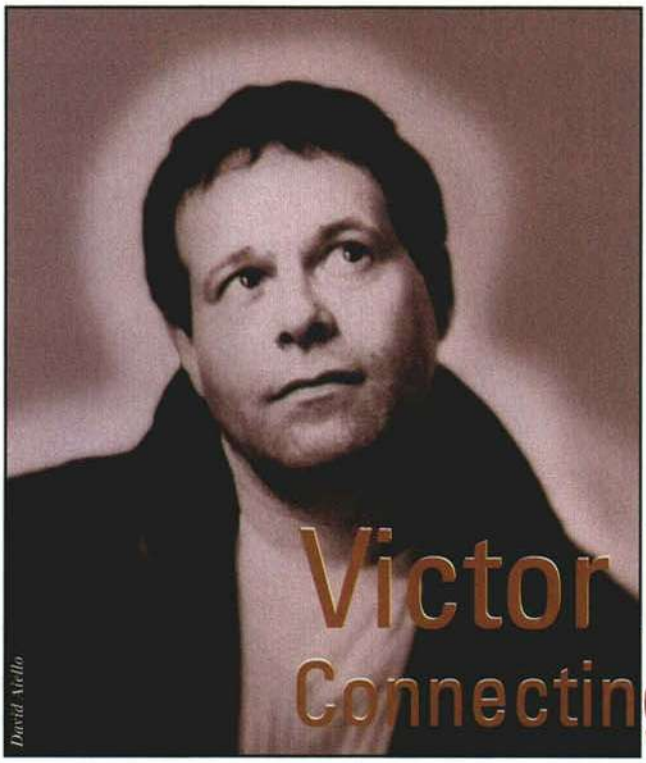


Victor DeLorenzo
Connecting With His Muse

Go to www.victordelorenzo.com, and you'll see a link labeled "A Man And His Muse-ic." Click on it, and up pops a photo of the Violent Femmes' founding drummer (said "man") next to a shot of iconoclastic French artist/thinker Marcel Duchamp (said "muse").

"He was a very intuitive soul," explains Victor, who calls Duchamp his "mentor and psychic eraser." "He inspires me to do as many things as I can and not be locked into one particular form." Indeed, DeLorenzo owns over sixty books by or about Duchamp (many of which are first editions) and recently led a study tour to New York City to examine the artist's life and work.

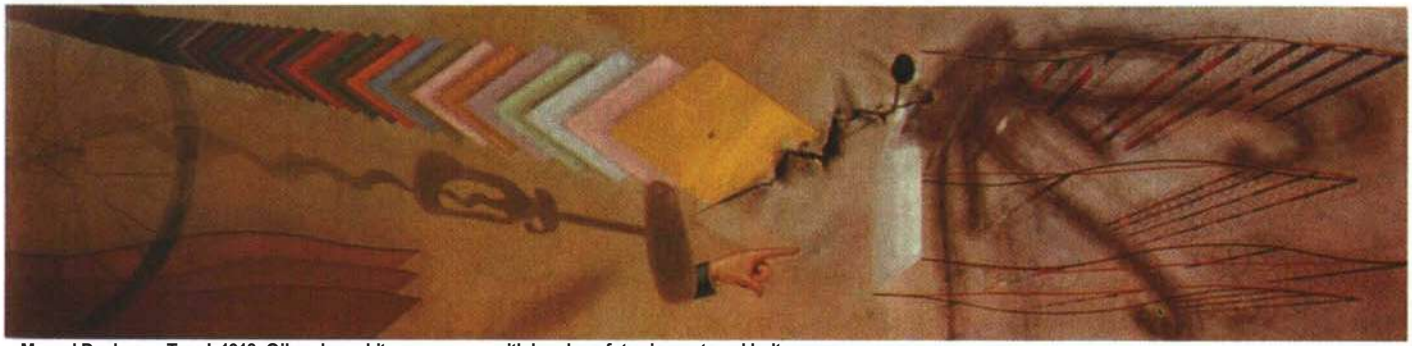
Marcel would be proud of how Victor has conducted his career thus far. A full-time actor before plunging into the rock life, DeLorenzo beat out thirty-five others hoping to replace Willem Dafoe in Milwaukee's famous Theatre X, with whom Victor won an OBIE award in 1978 for *A Fierce Longing.* Fate had other plans, though. In one of rock's great tales, Victor, bassist Brian Ritchie, and singer/guitarist Gordon Gano were discovered by The Pretenders busking outside a theater they were playing. Soon The Violent Femmes would become one of the most beloved, influential, and enduring acts ever.

DeLorenzo has never let the band completely define him, though. He has continued to pursue acting, painting, photography, writing, and soundtrack work. He's recorded k.d. Lang, Marshal Crenshaw, and a variety of other musicians in his own "OeS" studio in Milwaukee. He's released three solo albums, toured with The Velvet Underground's Moe Tucker and Sterling Morrison, and even produced a chant record for a Vedic research foundation. He's also built up quite a portfolio of commercial work, including music for Wisconsin State Television.

According to DeLorenzo, though, his favorite activity is bringing creative people together. "Collaboration is the penultimate experience for me," he insists. "I like to use my studio space almost as a salon. On any given Friday night you can find all kinds of people just hanging out and talking about music or film."

One suspects that if Marcel Duchamp himself were alive and living in Milwaukee today, you'd find him among the crowd.

Adam Budofsky



Marcel Duchamp. Tu m'. 1918. Oil and graphite on canvas, with brush, safety pins, nut, and bolt

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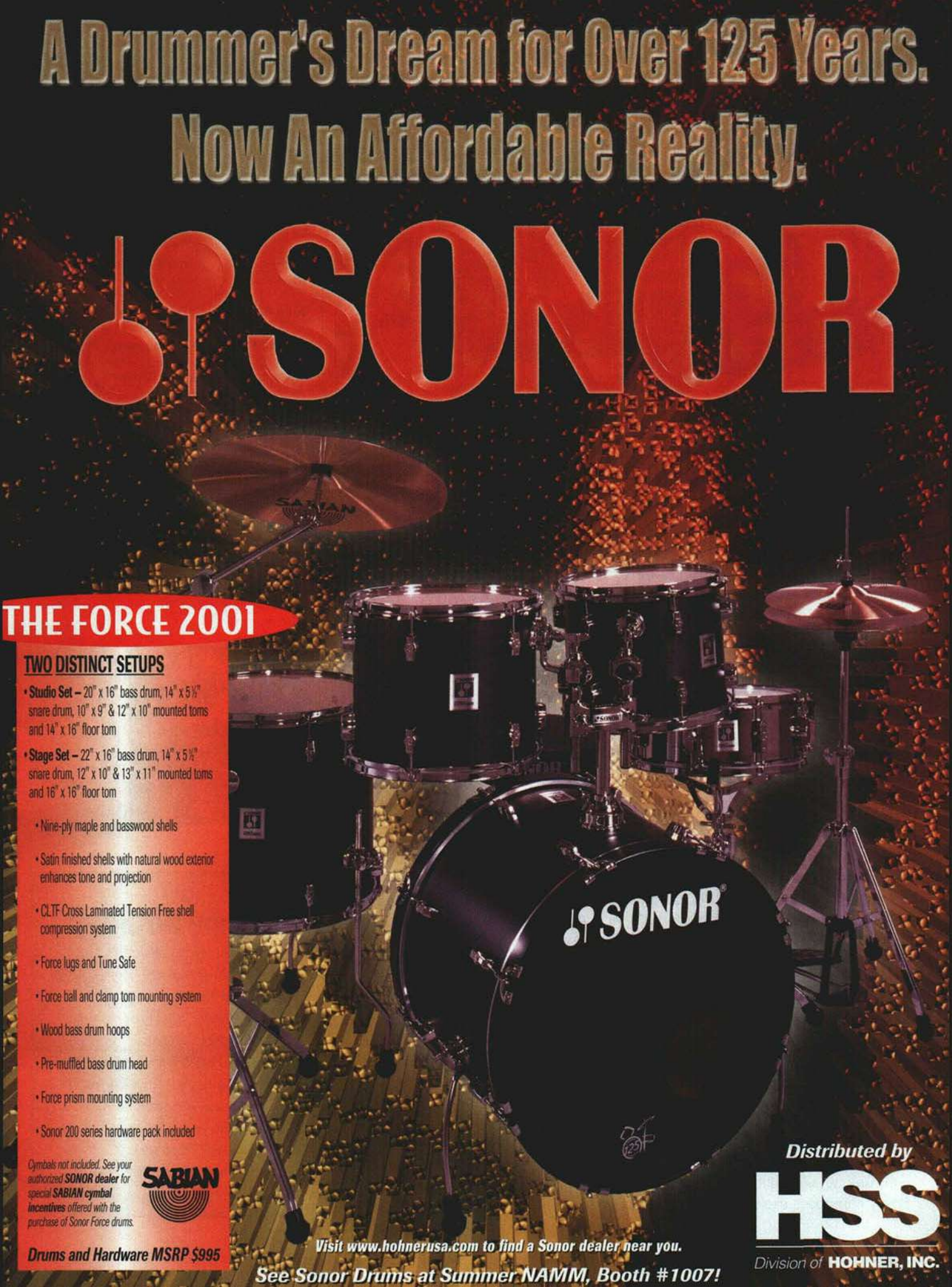

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Jorge Rossy

Melding With The Brad Mehldau Trio

From the moment he started playing with pianist Brad Mehldau, Jorge Rossy began to examine his own future. "After playing with Brad for two bars," Rossy insists, "I knew I could play with him the rest of my life. I knew he was just one of those special players."

Ten years later, Rossy is still drumming with Mehldau. Since 1995, when bassist Larry Grenadier joined up, The Brad Mehldau Trio has been on a roll, releasing six albums. Mehldau has since been called one of the great new arrivals in jazz piano, while the Grammy-nominated group is respected as one of today's best jazz trios, full of originality and expression.

Rossy, who arrived in the US in 1988 from Barcelona, Spain, is a perfect match for Mehldau, whose complex time feel, rhythmic sense, and classical influences require a drummer with unique sensibilities. Rossy composes exciting textures and dialog with the piano and bass, creating a colorful rhythmic backdrop. And yet the group still swings hard.

"Probably what makes it work for us is that we all feel we can play whatever we want to express," Rossy says. "And at the same time, we're not aimless. Brad's playing is so 'counterpoint.' I listen for how his and Larry's lines develop, and I play between them."

Rossy says his drumming has grown by leaps and bounds lately, thanks to his newfound passion: the piano. When we caught up with him at St. Louis's Jazz At The Bistro club recently. Jorge was rushing to the keys to work out chord changes for Nat King Cole's "Moonbeams." "Since I've been learning piano," he says, "I feel my drumming has improved. I'm less anal about it. I'm much more direct. And I'm learning a hell of a lot about phrasing and sound. It's changed the way I listen to music."

Last fall the trio returned to New York's Village Vanguard to record another live album in its *Art Of The Trio* series. Number five in the series—a double album—will be released this year.

Rossy is just as excited about recent side projects. In January he recorded two albums for the Spanish label Fresh Sound, to be released this year. One is with The Bloomdaddies, saxophonist Chris Cheek's eclectic jazz ensemble. That group even features three drummers—Rossy, Tony Mason, and Dan Reiser—on three tunes. The other project Jorge is jazzed about is an album recorded with folk/jazz singer-songwriter Rebecca Martin. Rossy also appears on the recent Fresh Sound release *Vine,* an album that features Cheek, Mehldau (on Fender Rhodes), guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkle, and bassist Matt Penman.

Ron Kemm

DRUM DATES

This month's important events in drumming history.

Buddy Rich was born on September 30, 1917.

John Bonham died on September 25, 1980.

Shelly Manne died on September 26, 1984.

Philly Joe Jones died in September of 1985.

On September 10, 1966, The Rolling Stones, with **Charlie Watts** on drums, appear on *The Ed Sullivan Show.*

On September 12, 1966, *The Monkees TV Show* premiers with actor-turned-drummer **Mickey Dolenz.**

Super-group Blind Faith's self-titled (and only) album hits number 1 on both the US and UK charts on September 20, 1969. **Ginger Baker** is on drums.

KISS'S double album *Kiss Alive* is released on September 10, 1975 and features **Peter Criss** on drums.

Happy Birthday!

Elvin Jones (September 9, 1927)
Horacee Arnold (September 25, 1935)
Ron Bushy (September 23, 1945)
Don Brewer (September 3, 1948)
Neil Peart (September 12, 1952)
Ginger Fish (September 28, 1965)
Robin Goodridge (September 10, 1966)
Steven Perkins (September 13, 1967)
Tyler Stewart (September 21, 1967)
Brad Wilk (September 5, 1968)
John Blackwell (September 9, 1973)

NEWS

Louis Bellson is on The Composer, a compilation of Oscar Peterson tracks recorded between 1974 and 1986

Papa Roach was forced to cancel some tour dates due to an aggravated condition in the left wrist of drummer David Buckner. Hopefully by the time you read this he'll be back in action.

Lynn Coulter played drums, sang, and co-wrote one track on Lauren Adams' new album, *Thirsty.* He also played on and co-wrote a tune for Cynthia Manley's new record. As for live work, Lynn is in the midst of a summer tour with Rita Coolidge and native American group Walela.

Brendan Hill is on Blues Traveler's new album, *Bridge.*

Tris Imboden is on one track of the new Kalapana album. He's also working on his own project with Keith Howland, and on tracks for an album by Gussie Miller. And all of this while in the midst of working with Chicago.

Sandy Gennaro is on tour with The Monkees.

Tony Coleman has a new CD out, *Travelin' Man.* He can also be heard on Ike Turner's latest, *Here And Now.*

Chet McCracken s newest CD is available for purchase online via www.cdbaby.com/chetchris.

Steve Ferrone is working on a new album with Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers.

Linda Pitmon is on Steve Wynn's new album, *Here Come The Miracles.*

Twenty-one-year-old Detroit native Tommy Clefetos is the new drummer for the Motor City madman, Ted Nugent.

Clancy McCarthy and Disclosed Styles Pin The Tail On The Honkey on their new one.

Omar Phillips has been busy gigging with The Tony Rich Project and The SOS Band. Omar is also touring Japan with Arrested Development in support of their CD, *The Heroes Of The Harvest*

Steve Rucker is on the new Bee Gees CD, *This Is Where I Came In.*

Louie Appel is touring with Southside Johnny.

Victor Indrizzo is playing with Beck. Victor is also recording tracks with Macy Gray for her new record. Look for him to tour with Gray.

Victor Jones is on tour with Michael Wolff, promoting Michael's CD *Impure Thoughts.* Frank Colon is on percussion and Badal Roy is on tablas.

Sean Moore ^ is on Manic Street Preachers' newest, *Know Your Enemy.*

Darryl White is touring with Chris Thomas King.

Joey Waronker and Matt Chamberlain are on Miranda Lee Richards' debut, *The Herethereafter,*

Ian Wallace, Jeff Donovan, and Charles "Mojo" Johnson are on Rosie Florres' *Speed Of Sound.*

Darren Thiboutot is on Kenny Meal's *One Step Closer.*

Victor Rendon, Jerome Goldschmidt, and Johnny Rodriguez are on The Latin-Jazz Coalition's *Trombon Con Sazon.*

Lukmil Perez and Alexis Cuesta are on Julio Padron Y Los Amigos De Sta. Amalia's *Descarga Santa.*

Steve Berrios and Curtis Boyd are on Freddy Cole's *Rio De Janeiro Blue.*

The Finger Trio's *Balance* features drummer Christian Finger and a guest appearance by the legendary Lee Konitz.

The latest in forward-looking Chicagoan jazz comes courtesy Ted Sirota's Rebel Souls on *...Vs. The Forces Of Evil.*

Steve Negus is on Saga's latest, *House Of Cards.*

Rob Watson and Basi Mahlasela are on steel pan star Andy Narell s *Live In South Africa.*

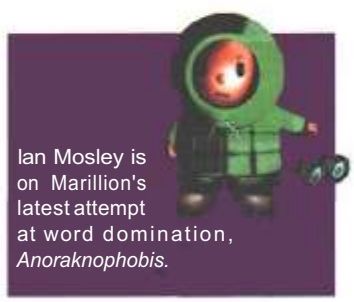
Mallet-man Dave Samuels' Caribbean Jazz Project has a new one out, *Paradiso.* Richie Flores, Luisito Quintero, and Dafnis Prieto set the pulse, while the great Poncho Sanchez guests on one track.

Fusion-oid and *MD* contributor Mike Haid can be heard on two new prog rock/fusion releases: The Cincinnati Improvisational Group's *Aberration* and Michael Harris's *Sketches From The Thought Chamber.*

Anders Mogensen appears on *Scraggly Music* by The Jacob Anderskov Trio, featuring bassist Michael Formanek.

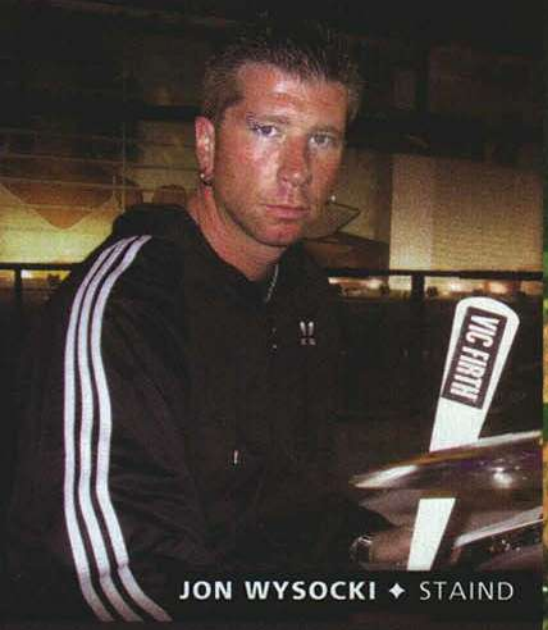
Joe Farnsworth is on Eric Alexander's new one, *The Second Milestone.*

Kenny Washington's on organ maestro Jimmy McGriff's *Feelin' It.*



Ian Mosley is on Marillion's latest attempt at word domination, *Anoraknophobis.*

Modern Drummer September 2001 33



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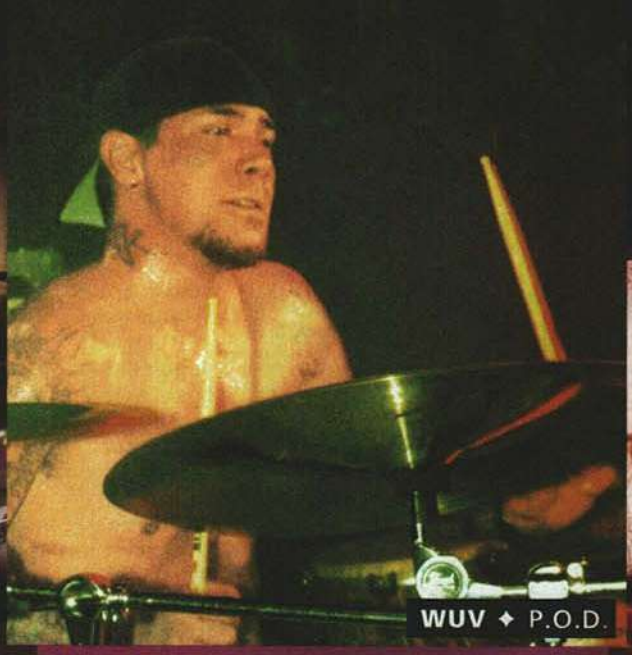

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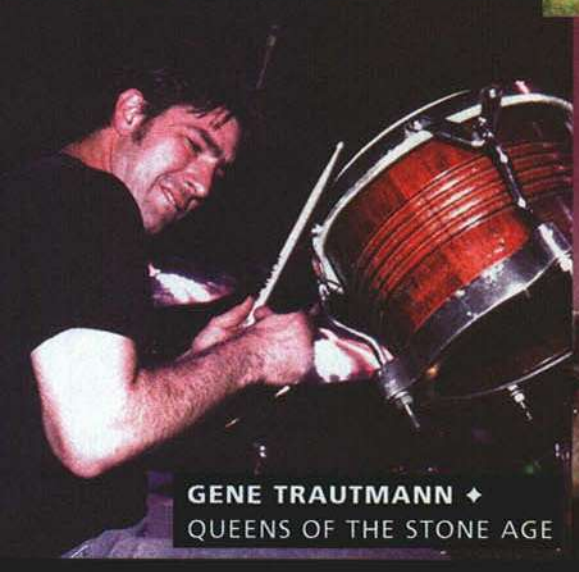
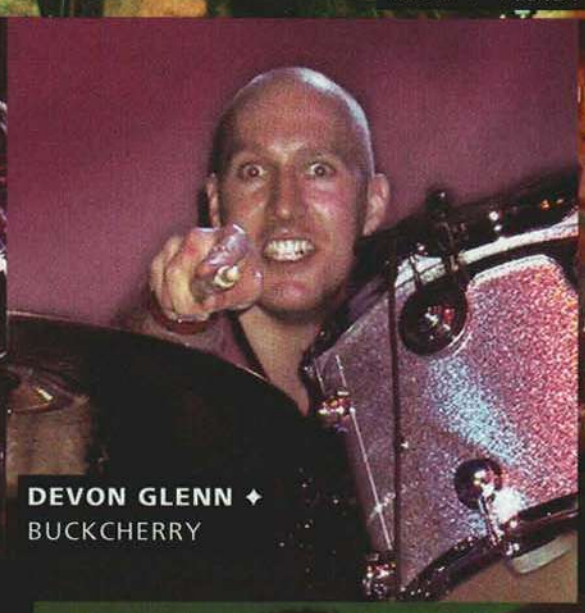


GENE TRAUTMANN ✦
QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE



DEVON GLENN ✦
BUCKCHERRY

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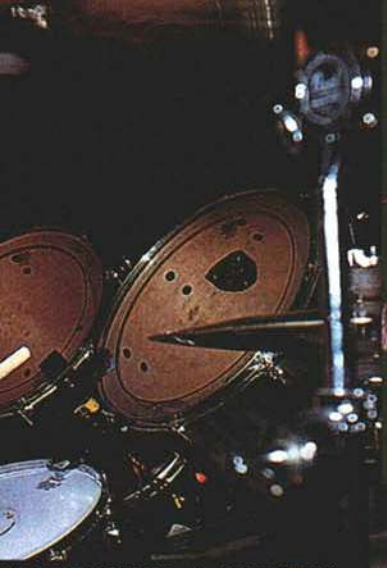

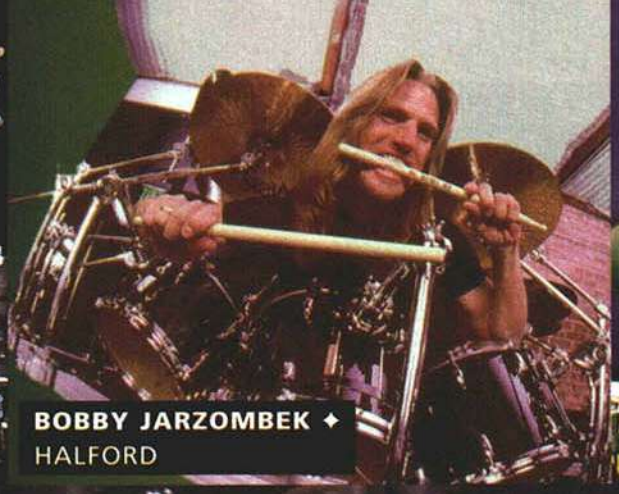

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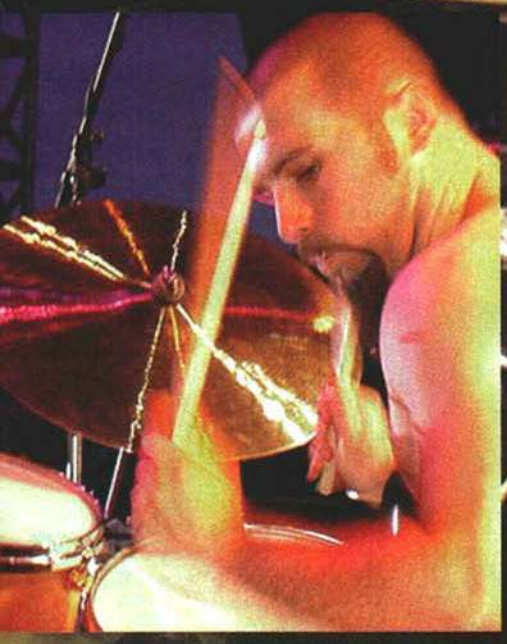
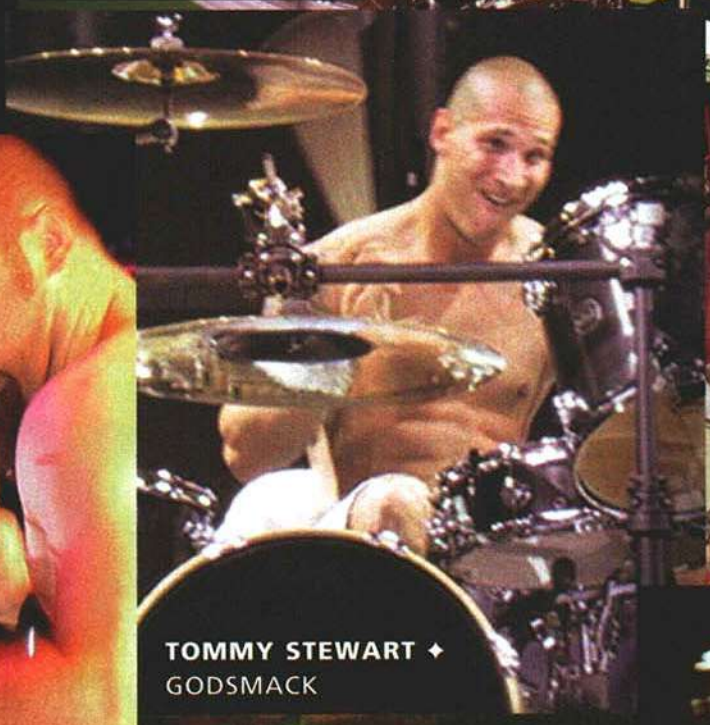
HALFORD

JARROD MONTAGUE ✦
TAPROOT

VINNY PAUL ✦ PANTERA





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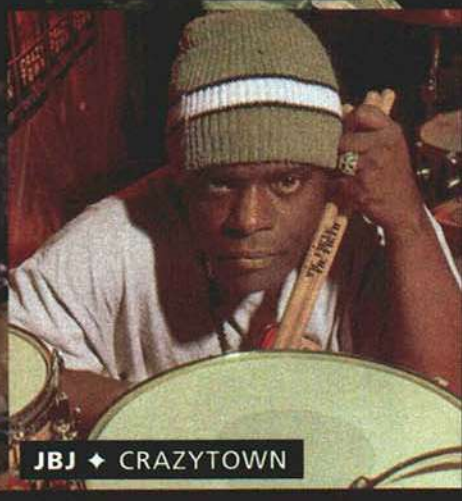
GODSMACK



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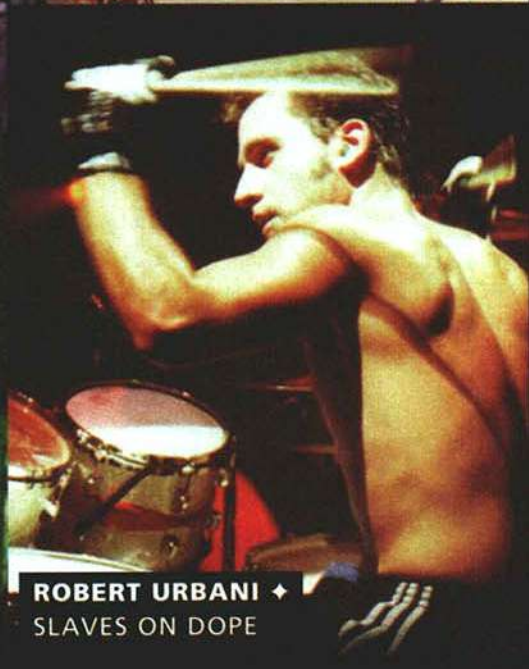

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Soulive's ALAN EVANS

Mr. Get Down

Story by Michael Parillo
Photos by Paul La Raia

Soulive is introduced, and three sharply dressed gentlemen take the stage. Twenty-seven-year-old Alan Evans coolly straightens his tie, grabs his sticks, and digs into a swinging, swaggering funk beat. The packed-house crowd starts to boogie, reacting to every slick maneuver by the drummer, his younger brother Neal on keyboards, and Eric Krasno on guitar. It's "get down" time.

Falling somewhere near the crossroads where jazz and funk converge, Soulive's music grooves hard and is brightened by snazzy stick-in-your-head melodies. Neal Evans coaxes greasy tidal waves of sound from his Leslie speaker while playing bass lines with his left hand. Krasno picks out bluesy, finger-lickin' phrases on his hollow-body six-string. And Alan reaches *way* into the pocket to pound out a backbeat that would make an old lady in a jazz club spill her drink. But these guys don't play jazz clubs; at a Soulive show, the bandmembers are the only ones sitting down.

Rewind. Growing up in Buffalo, New York, Alan Evans started playing straight-ahead jazz gigs at the ripe age of twelve, and was essentially a professional musician by sixteen. "I went to school," he says, "but my nights were spent in clubs or studios." Alan and Neal formed the jammy Moon Boot Lover in 1990, during the drummer's sophomore year of high school. In 1996, after relocating to New York City and then to Woodstock, the brothers left the band. But several tours of the Northeast had given Alan a taste for the road: "I knew that *this* was what I wanted to do."

"I like stuff that makes me bounce—D'Angelo, Marvin Gaye, Stevie Wonder. And that's why I play the way I do."

Stints with The Greyboy Allstars and Karl Denson's Tiny Universe imparted valuable experience, but, says Alan, "Playing as a sideman wasn't my thing. Neal and I wanted to do something of our own." They'd met Krasno in Boston when his band Lettuce gigged with Moon Boot Lover, but didn't really consider getting serious until the guitarist came down to Woodstock in 1999 to rehearse for a few shows the brothers had booked for their already defunct new trio with a vibraphonist. Alan taped the jams. "The sound was there immediately," he says. "We listened back, and it was a band."

Thus Soulive was born. The group's first EP, *Get Down!,* was cut during those first sessions with Krasno; the full-length *Turn It Out* followed in 2000. And earlier this year, groove-hungry fans started snapping up *Doin' Something,* the trio's Blue Note debut, which features James Brown/P-Funk trombonist Fred Wesley on several cuts.

Packing rock clubs around the country and supporting The Dave Matthews Band for stadium shows last spring, this groove-jazz trio is indeed "doing something." As Alan says, with a mixture of confidence and humility, "We've been really fortunate: Whatever we set out to accomplish, it happens."

MD: How long have you been playing?
Alan: I have no memory of starting, none whatsoever. There was a drumset in the house because my father messed around as a hobby. My mom said I first picked up drumsticks when I was about nine months old. When I was two, I got a snare drum for Christmas that I'm still playing now.
MD: Did you study?
Alan: Not really. I wasn't the best student. I liked doing my own thing. The best lessons I ever had were from my father. I'd be downstairs jamming on the drumset and he'd get behind me and play while holding my arms. It's like teaching a child how to ride a bicycle—you hold onto them until they get the feeling, and then you let go. Obviously I'd fall—I'd lose the groove—and I'd pick it up again. Those weren't really even *lessons:* I guess he just didn't like what he heard! [laughs]

The most important thing is that my father instilled in me the love for music. I grew up listening to Max Roach, Elvin Jones, Tony Williams, Art Blakey—all the jazz drummers you can think of. But my father taught me that it's not about the drums, it's about the *group.* I was so intrigued that he knew all of the instruments' solos. He would sing along with solos and ask, "Okay, who's playing there?" He taught me to be musical and that it's about how cats interact with each other, rather than just what the drummer is doing.
MD: Let's talk about Soulive. The group is barely two years old, yet you seem to have had instant success.
Alan: We got lucky and hooked up with some really fat gigs right from the beginning. We used Lettuce's and Moon Boot's mailing lists, and got a bunch of people out. Promoters just took notice. We gigged early on with Derek Trucks and did a tour with Robben Ford. And the Internet has totally helped us gain a huge fan base in a short period of time.
MD: Do you allow taping at your shows?
Alan: Oh, yeah. That's another thing—the taping community got a hold of us

Soulful Drums

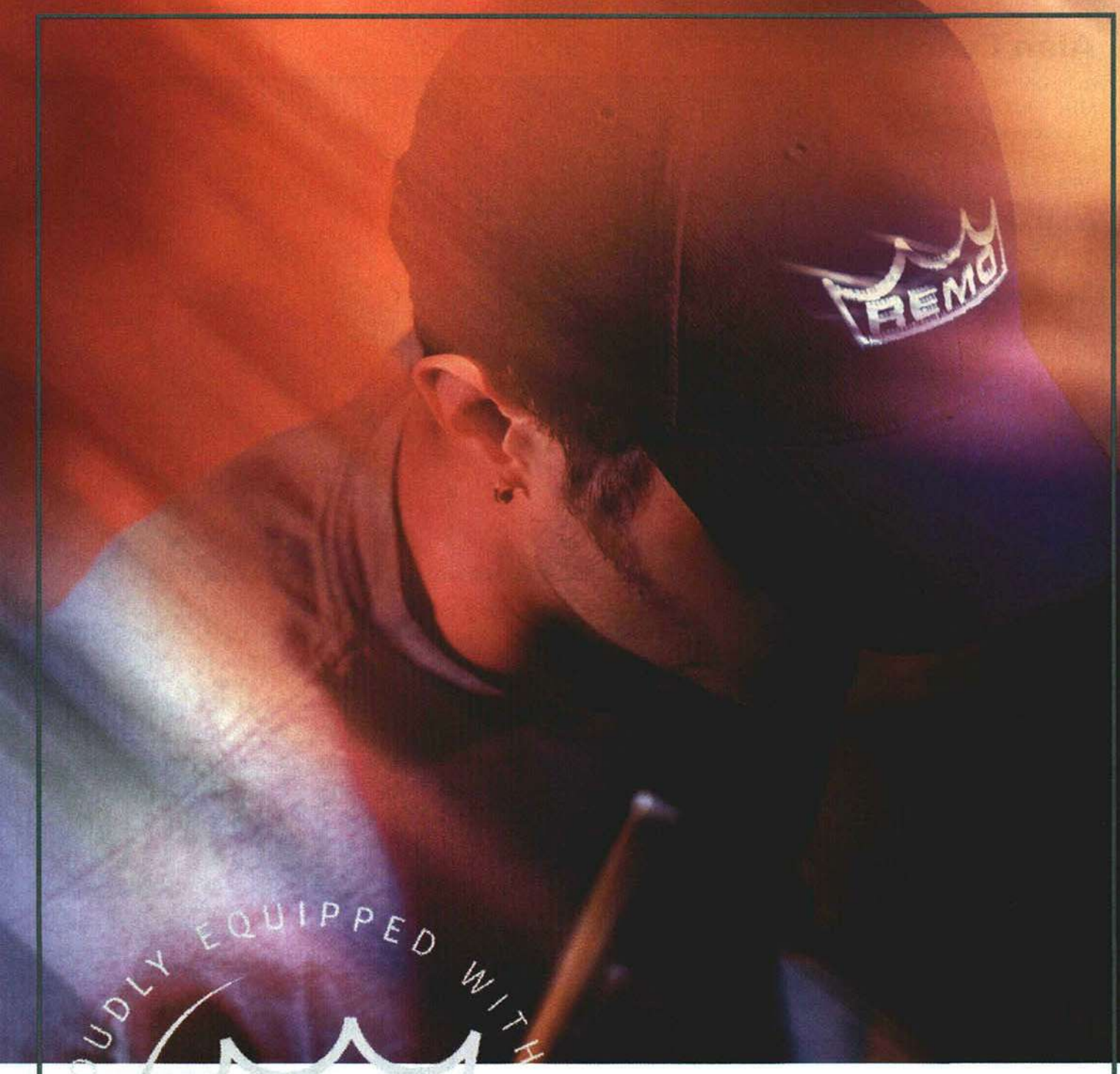
Drums: Keller maple shells with mahogany stain
A. 5 x14 Ludwig snare (from 1940s)
B. 5 x14 Pearl Sensitone snare (aluminum shell)
C. 10 x 12 tom
D. 14 x14 floor tom
E. 16 x 20 bass drum

Cymbals: Zildjian
1. 16" Special EFX crash
2. 14" K Custom hi-hats
3. 20" K Medium-Dark ride
4. 21 "K Heavy ride
5. 17" A Custom crash

Hardware: DW 5000 hi-hat stand, 7000 bass drum pedal (with medium tension), Pearl suspension mounts on toms

Heads: Remo coated Ambassadors on tops of snare drums and toms, clear Ambassadors on bottoms of toms, PowerStroke 3 on bass drum batter with Renaissance head on front (relatively tight tuning, and no muffling on any drums, including bass drum)

Sticks: Pro-Mark 5B, 747, and 720 Natural models (hickory, wood tip)



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really early. It's great.

MD: What do you think it is that audiences are responding to?

Alan: It's music for the people. It's not hard to get. If you want to sit down and tear it apart, you're going to find some things in there that are complex, but for the most part it's simple music. Our melodies are easy to grasp onto.

We're not shy onstage, and we have a lot of fun. A lot of bands play really good music but can't put on a show. I've always loved entertainers: James Brown, Sly Stone, Jimi Hendrix. It's one thing to be a good musician, but I also like entertaining people.

MD: What does Soulive do to put on a show?

Alan: People dig the fact that we're in suits—it's cool to look at. And there's a lot of audience participation. I'm the emcee, and I get cats screaming and clapping along. We want the crowd to be a part of the show. That's why they keep coming back.

MD: Behind the kit, your feel is based on 8th notes, whether they're straight or closer to swung.

Alan: I dig 8th notes. They're the focus of my right hand on the hi-hat or ride, and whatever I put in between is cool. My biggest influences are James Brown's drummers. I try to achieve a feel that really swings but that doesn't have too much

pro-file

He's always
Doin' Something well.

Alan Evans.

As the founding member of the jazzy funk band, Soulive, Alan's latest album is doin something to the old-school soul, hip-hop and funk scenes. It's doin' something for jazz too, bringing back that old jazz feel with new interpretations. Alan does everything with our TX5A and TX 747 wood-tip sticks. Must be doin' something right.

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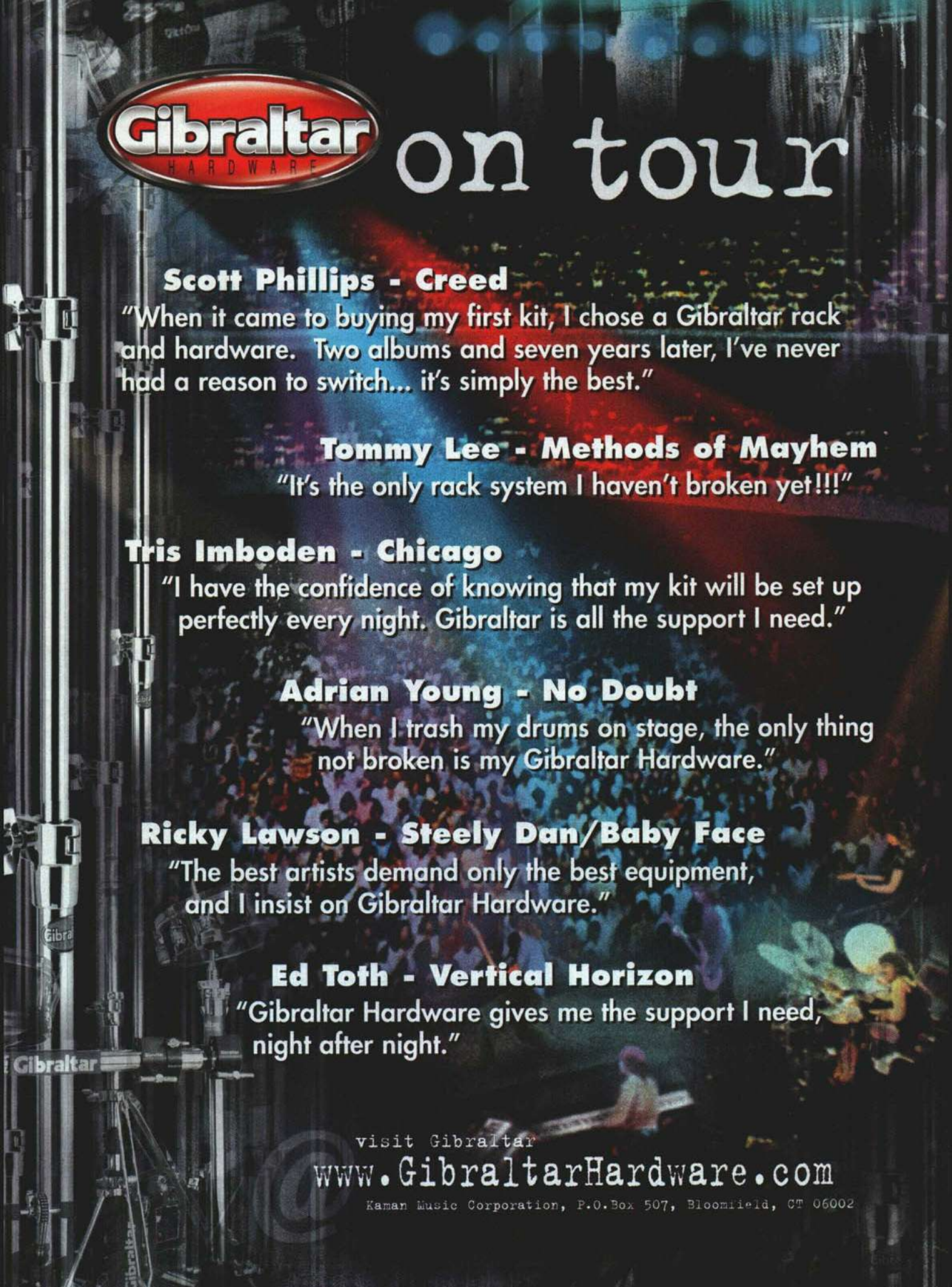
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Kaman Music Corporation, P.O.Box 507, Bloomfield, CT 06002

going on within it—just a pulse, without lots of polyrhythmic stuff.

MD: You show serious restraint but toss in short, blazing single-stroke rolls every now and then.

Alan: I totally live by "less is more." There was a time when I was listening to nothing but The Mahavishnu Orchestra. I shedded all that stuff. I can do it if I really try, but it doesn't feel like me. I guess I'm not a big showman on the drums. If I throw in little things like that, it's just to get somewhere else. If I'm on the hi-hat rockin' it and I want to go to my ride, I throw in a little fill just to get over there. That's all it is.

MD: All your energy is put toward making the music feel good.

Alan: I like stuff that makes me bounce—D'Angelo, Marvin Gaye, Stevie Wonder. And that's why I play the way I do. When I listen back to our CDs, I wanna bounce. I'm not looking for how many 64th notes I played in this little two-bar section, or whatever.

MD: You seem to hit hard.

Alan: I hit *extremely* hard. I've been influenced there by Tony Williams and Elvin Jones. But one of my biggest influences—period—is Jimi Hendrix, someone who wasn't afraid to let it all hang out. If you're going to play loud, you'd better play *good.* If somebody plays really loud and they're amazing, you don't notice their volume. That's just my personality—I'm not afraid to play. I always tell people, "They're drums!"

MD: They want to be hit!

Alan: Exactly. Don't get me wrong—I also love playing soft, when it's appropriate.

MD: What's it like playing without a bass player?

Alan: Neal's one of my favorite bassists. [laughs] He leaves a lot of space, where sometimes bassists can't get their fingers off the strings. Neal *loves* bassists. If you say, "Yo, lemme hear some Jaco [Pastorius, legendary fretless bass player]," he'll play some for you right there.

MD: He'll duplicate Jaco lines on his organ?

Alan: Oh, dude. We play his "Teen Town" sometimes and Neal just kills it—while laying the organ down at the same time. It's sick.

MD: Is there an equivalent with the organ to the way a drummer's kick links up with the bassist's thumb?

Alan: Yeah. That's just natural to us. We've been playing together all our lives. We know what each other's thinking before we even think it. Actually, it probably doesn't matter what instruments we ended up playing. I also play guitar, and Neal plays drums. We used to have a power trio with a bassist, and the level of communication was the same. In Soulive, a lot of times we're linking it up, and other times we're playing off each other. Both sound cool, it's whether you do it in an appropriate way.

MD: Is there any difference between your albums and your gigs?

Alan: It's night and day. We change our arrangements so often that by the time the album comes out they're totally different. We haven't been able to capture the essence of the show on CD yet. It's hard, 'cause it's *not just* the show. It's the anticipation—two weeks before when you get your ticket, when you're driving to the club—that really creates the magic. You can put the CD on at any time, wherever

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— John Aldridge *Not So Modern Drummer (September 2001)*

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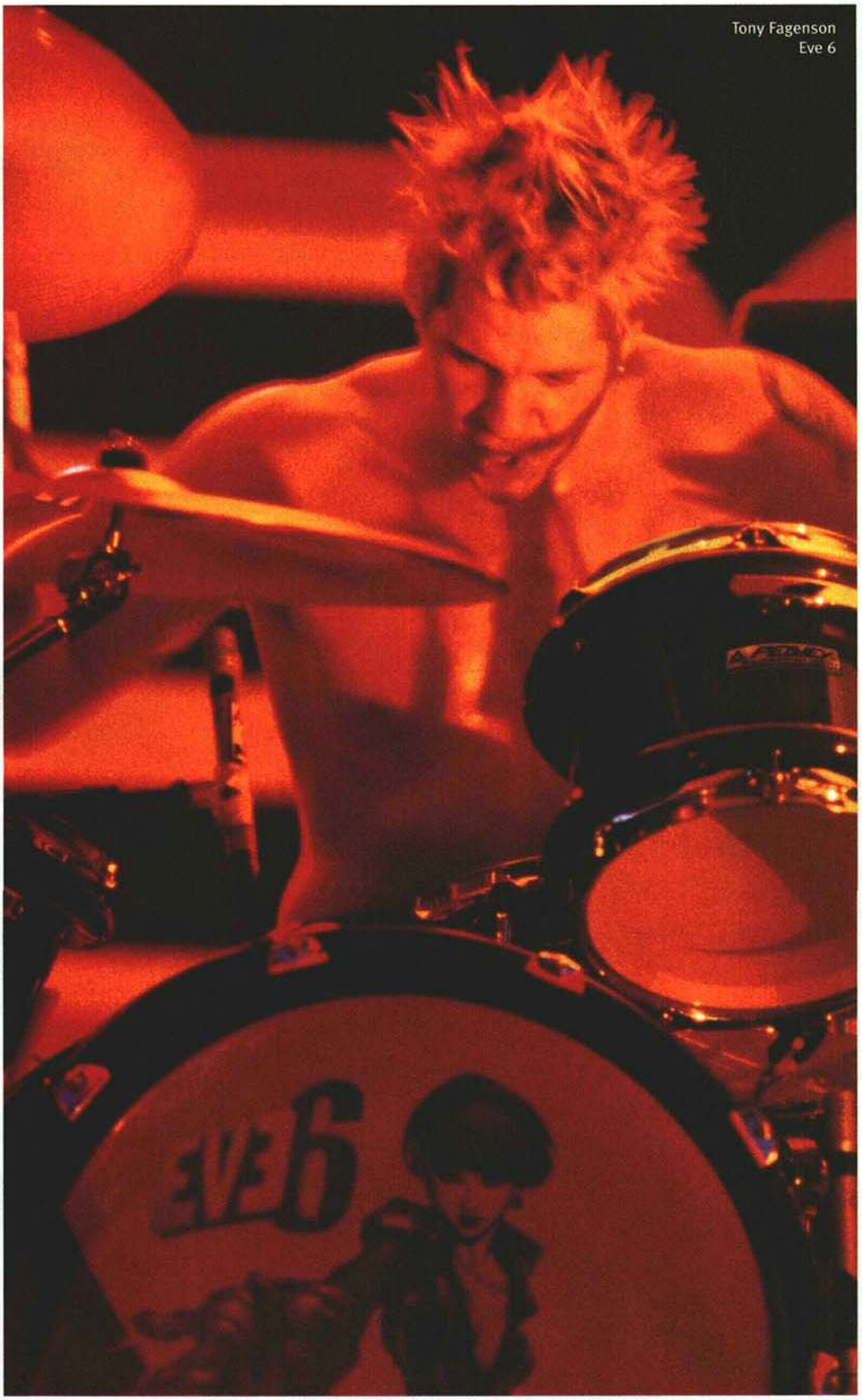

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LISTEN TO THIS

you are. It's not the same.

MD: But are you pleased with *Doin' Something?*

Alan: I love it. It's a good representation of what we were doing at that moment. I've been recording a long time, and a lot of stuff I still can't listen to. [laughs]

MD: What was it like playing with Fred Wesley?

Alan: It was one of the best experiences I've ever had. We ran into Fred after we made our first CD, and we gave him a copy. And then we were in the studio with him! He's just the nicest guy. You'd never even know he's been all over the world in some of the most influential groups in history. He's just chillin'—he's like your next-door neighbor. He was glad to be there. It was inspiring.

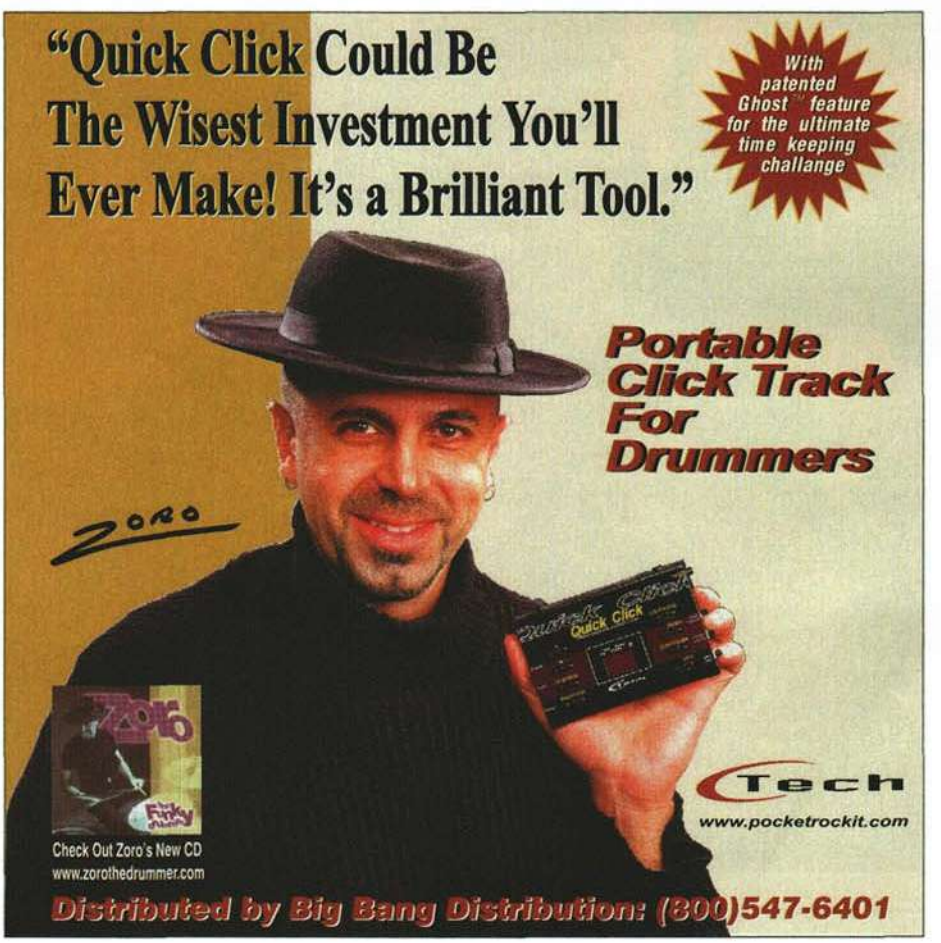
It was the same with John Scofield [who plays guitar on two tracks on *Turn It* Out]. We were both doing this festival, and he came over to check us out. He dug it, and a few months later we were in the studio. He's turned out to be a great friend. He gave me some great advice when I told him that my wife and I were having a kid. We sat down and talked for a while about what it's like to be a father and a musician on the road. We didn't talk about music; we were just talking about some serious shit.

MD: You've written a bunch of tunes for Soulive. What's your approach?

Alan: Most of my ideas come to me in the shower. I get the melody in my head, and I start singing it. I'll get it out on guitar or keys, then I'll put it away. If it's still in my head the next day, I'll keep working on it. If I can't remember it, I just let it go—it's not worth it. My friend [Greyboy Allstar keyboardist] Robert Walter says our tunes are "annoyingly catchy." [laughs] And that's probably why. If I can remember it, there must be something to it.

I love writing music. If I have a couple of good tunes a few years down the line, that would make me feel really good.

For more information on Alan Evans and Soulive, visit the trio's Web site at www.soulive.com.



NEW SCHOOL

Drum Workshop's education department roster includes many of the world's leading drum artists and educators. Shown above (from left to right) are: Marco Minnemann. Curt Bisquera, Gary Novak, Chad Wackerman, Chester Thompson, Terry Bozzio, Carl Allen, Tommy Igoe, Johnny Rabb, Hilary Jones, Billy Ward, Zoro, Stephen Perkins, Rick Latham and Tony Royster, Jr.

One of the oldest and perhaps most honored traditions in drumming continues to be community sponsored drum clinics. At Drum Workshop, we understand and accept this responsibility. In fact, our dedication to drum education dates back to our earliest days in the business. Before we ever made our first bass drum pedal or drumset, DW was a small teaching studio in Santa Monica, California and today our commitment to supporting the education of drummers remains just as important as our commitment to providing them with the finest drums, pedals, hardware and accessories. Over the years, as our company has grown, our pledge to invest in the future of drumming by contributing to a wide variety of educational activities has grown with it.

In the first half of 2001 our artists participated in over 100 educational events; including clinics, seminars and master classes at music dealers, drum shops, schools and theaters throughout the US, South America, Europe and Asia. By the end of the year we will nearly double that number through our support of drum festivals, international conferences and special dealer tours as well as our annual "Drum Day LA" concert in Los Angeles.

As drummers one thing we've learned is that there's always something new to be learned. So if there's a drum clinic going on in your area, why not check it out? Because, while improving the art of drumming may be old school, helping you improve your drumming... now that's definitely new school.

Check-out DW's complete Fall 2001 clinic schedule online at www.dwdrums.com/eddept

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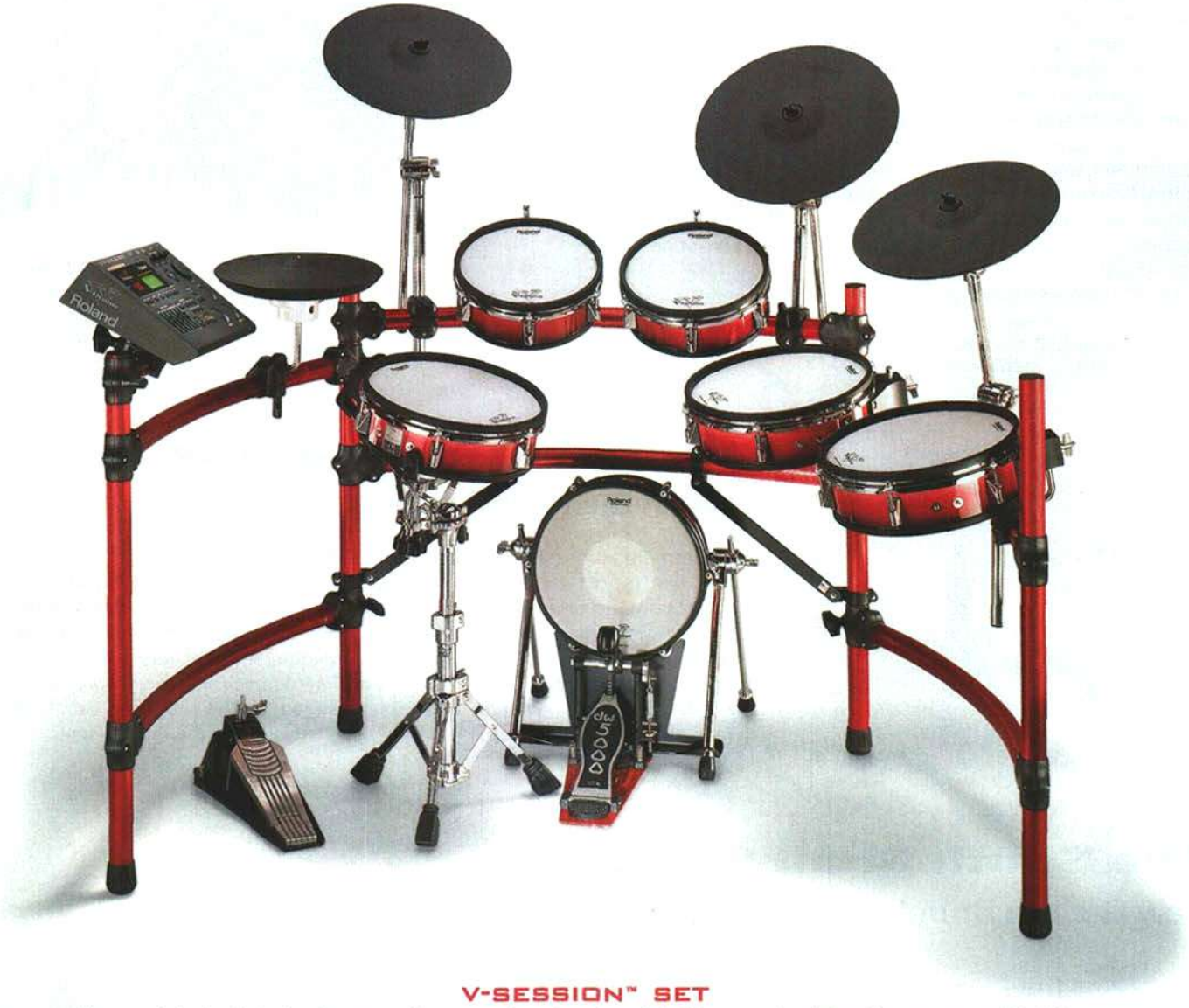

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Stage Custom Advantage

Bucking the theory that you don't mess with a good thing, Yamaha has completely redesigned and reintroduced their successful Stage Custom drumkit line. Designed "for drummers at every skill level," the new line consists of two series: Stage Custom Standard and Stage Custom Advantage.

Common Features: YESS suspension mounts on all toms, 17"-deep bass drums with Remo PowerStroke 3 heads, TH-945 triple tom holders, and 700 Series hardware.

Stage Custom Standard Features: Eight-ply shells (mahogany with an outer birch ply), redesigned steel-shell snare, separate lugs on toms and bass drums, four matte finishes. List price for five-piece kit: $1,199.

Stage Custom Advantage Features: Hi-tension lug casings and shell construction of the original Stage Custom, matching wood snare drum, four metallic and two gloss finishes. List price for five-piece kit: $1,349.

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Most drummers tend to regard their drum seat as a functional item. Comfort and support are important, but looks...*ehh.* Soundseat feels that outstanding ergonomics should be enhanced by outstanding aesthetics. They've added master upholsterers Donnie and Linda Black to their team, and now offer seats with what they modestly describe as "remarkably exquisite upholstery and tailoring." In addition, master embroiderers Ashlee and Raymond Smith can embroider any name or band name, as well as most custom logos, on the seats and seat backs. Also available is a handcrafted, all-leather carrying case for the retrofit seat.

(704) 636-3560, www.Soundseat.com.

The South Shall Rise Again

New Gretsch Drumkit Series

In a burst of percussive energy, Gretsch has introduced three new drumkit series. The new kits range from the entry-level to the mid-price range.

Catalina Stage Series: High-gloss PVC covered finishes, "quick-size" mounted toms with GTS suspension system, matching wood snare, pro-quality double-tom holder, and pre-muffled bass drum heads. List price is $795 for shell pack, $995-$1,345 with Gibraltar hardware packs.

Catalina Elite Series: Features as with Catalina Stage Series, but with high-gloss see-through UV lacquer finishes and natural maple-accented bass drum hoops. List price is $1,145 for shell pack, $1,345-$1,695 with Gibraltar hardware packs.

Renown Maple Series: Shells of 100% US maple finished in high-gloss, see-through lacquer, with Gretsch Silver Sealer on all interiors. Matching 10-ply maple snare drum, 18"-deep bass drum (without the bass drum mount), and GTS suspension system on all mounted toms. List price is $1,945 for shell pack, $2,145-$2,595 with Gibraltar hardware packs.

(860) 509-8888, www.kamanmusic.com.

Catalina Elite

Flipped Over Sounds

Unigrip Flipsticks

Unigrip's new Flipsticks were created on the basis of the "do more with less" concept. The idea is to let drummers extend their playing capabilities and enhance their sound without ever changing sticks.

The Marching Mallet has a mallet on one end and a marching corps shaft and tip on the other. (It might also make a great alternative rock stick.)

The Flipstick Nylon is a rock stick with wood or nylon tips on one end and nylon rods on the other, cut 3" short to create "a well-balanced stick with amazing attack and bounce."

The Flipstick Bamboo is similar to the Nylon, but features bamboo rods that will shred instead of break, creating a unique sound and a longer-lasting stick.

The Unigrip Brush is a retractable wire brush with a playable nylon tip on its handle.

The Flipstick Mallet is a 5A stick with nylon or wood tips on one end and a mallet on the other. The Dipstick grip has been added to this model. List price for Flipstick models is $27.95.

(800) 474-7068, www.unigrip2000.com.

Everybody Do The Conga

Meinl Professional Series Congas

Meinl's already extensive conga line has just been extended further by the addition of the Professional Series.The new drums are slated for the mid-price range.

Features: Congas are 30" tall, come in **11", 11/",** and 12 1/2" head diameters, and are available in natural and cherry red finish.Two-ply stave shells are made from rubber wood. Fitted with SSR rims, buffalo-skin heads, and 10-mm tuning lugs covered by Conga Saver rubber bumpers.

(877) 877-88-MEINL, goMeinl@aol.com.

Have Pads, Will Travel

Gibraltar Travel Practice Pad Set And 3-Sided Drum Rack

When it's time to get off the drums and into the practice room, Gibraltar's new Travel Practice Pad Set ($349.50) might be just the ticket. Created in conjunction with HQ Percussion, makers of RealFeel pads, the set includes 6", 8", and 10" RealFeel pads and a 10" Gibraltar GBDP bass drum pad. The mid-tom pad includes a 1/3 section of Neoprene to simulate "cymbal ride" effects. All pads are mounted on Gibraltar's JZ series stands for solid yet lightweight support.

In addition, the original three-sided drum rack is back in the form of Gibraltar's upgraded GPR-450 model ($484.95). Additional memory locks and new miniT-leg assemblies have been added, and the left- and right-side 36" extensions are fully adjustable in height and width.

(860) 509-8888, www.kamanmusic.com.

Onward And Upward

Pearl Eliminator Generation II Improvements And Drum Cases & Bags

Never a company to rest on their laurels, Pearl has added improvements to their Eliminator line of bass drum pedals. New Generation II belts are constructed from three layers of "virtually indestructible" industrial-grade plastic. Belt and chain models have completely new die-cast stainless-steel linkage assemblies. And double pedals are equipped with driveshafts that are 20% stronger, with stainless-steel "zero-play" universal joints.

Pearl is also offering new bags and cases to protect your drums.

Vinyl Bags: Feature lightweight but durable soft vinyl exteriors, padded cotton linings, soft-grip rubber handles, nylon carrying straps with heavy-duty nylon stitching, and a two-year warranty.

Heavyweight Fabric Bags: Feature nylon exteriors, plush padded linings, grips and straps as with vinyl bags, and *a* five-year warranty.

Hard Drum Cases: Feature high-density outer shells, thick interior padding, snap-lock buckles, ergonomically comfortable handles, and a limited lifetime warranty.

615-833-4477, www.pearldrums.com.

Family Affair

Toca Pete EscovedoTimbales And Peter Michael Escovedo Combo Set

The Escovedo family has been making great percussion sounds for two generations. Now Toca offers signature percussion instruments designed for two members of that illustrious family.

Pete EscovedoTimbales: Single-ribbed 6 1/2"-deep by 14" and 15" steel shells accented with gold-plated rims and tension brackets. Bottom edges turned out for increased cascara playing surface. Gibraltar stand includes updated cowbell mounting bracket and molded support block. Each set comes with limited-edition badge featuring Pete's signature.

Peter Michael Escovedo Combo Set: Matching congas ($759.50), bongos ($199.50), and wood timbales ($499.50) in satin mandarin orange finish, from Toca's Elite series. Congas and bongos have bison skin heads, chrome hardware, and gold tension rods. Timbales have 2-ply staved Asian oak shells. Instruments can be purchased individually as well as in the set. **(860) 509-8888, www.kamanmusic.com.**

And What's More

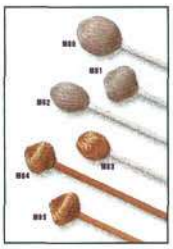
The **DUALIST** double-action single bass drum pedal now has US distribution. The East Coast distributor (also handling Internet inquiries) is Vermont Drums, (802}525-4909, **www.vermontdrums.com.** The Canadian and US West Coast distributor is Tesscan Inc., (514)488-9564. email: abtessier@jonction.net.

AYOTTE DRUMS has added an 8x8 tom size to their ProMaple series. The series features 100% rock maple shells, with sound reinforcement rings and the Ayotte TuneLock system. The tom comes complete with Ayotte's Suspension Bridge and StrongArm clamp mounting system, at $470. Also new to the ProMaple series is a transparent stained deep wine-red gloss finish called Cabernet. (877) 736-5111, www.ayottedrums.com.

ISTANBUL MEHMET cymbals are now represented in the US by **UNIVERSAL PERCUSSION,** (800)282-0110, www.universalperciission.com.

BILLY MARTIN (aka illy B) has released his first breakbeat vinyl record: *illy B Eats Groove, Bang And Jive Around.* The record contains thirteen tracks of "funky drumming and percussion to make you dance, rap, spin, scratch, and compose music with." You are invited to submit your ideas to illy B Eats and have the chance to collaborate with Billy Martin on the follow-up double CD compilation, which will include special guests www.AmuletRecords.com

DAVE WECKL has a new signature drumstick from **VIC FIRTH DRUMSTICKS.** According to Dave, "After twelve years with my original signature model, I found I needed another stick to accommodate the change in my body and to help facilitate new things I've learned over recent years." Dave's new Evolution hickory stick has a short teardrop tip on a 5A shaft (16" long, .563" in diameter), a "vintage" colored finish, and a list price of $13.50.



Also new from Vic Firth are Brian Mason and Jeff Lee signature Corpsmaster keyboard mallets for drum corps use. (781) 326-3455, www.vicfirth.com.

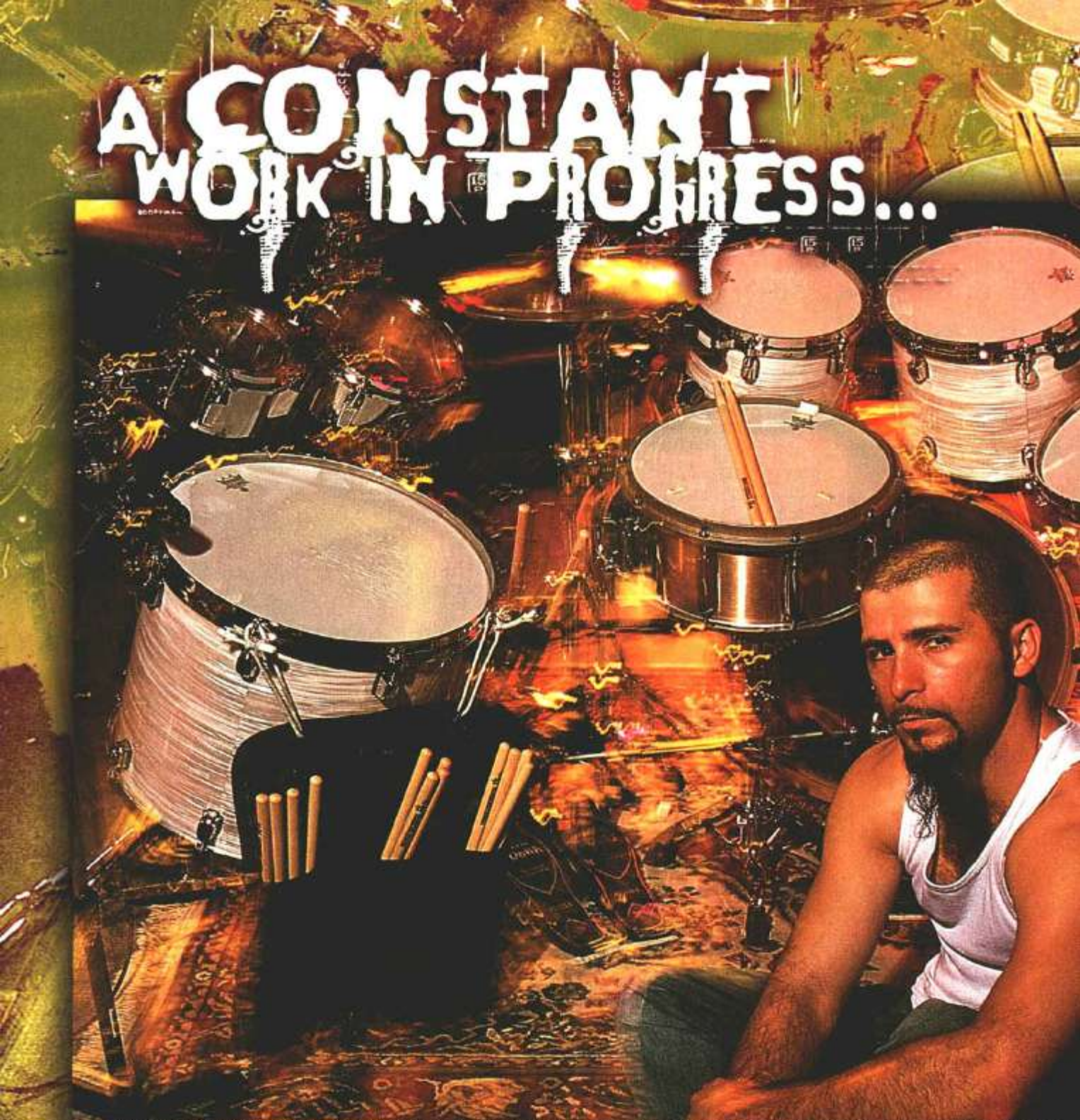
The MARYLAND DRUM COMPANY is a new manufacturer offering American-made drums designed by Keith Larsen, formerly of Baltimore Drum. The company states that their drums "blend traditional craftsmanship with technical innovation," and that "complete custom capability is available to almost anyone." (410) 584-2539, email: dastri@marylanddrum.com.

REGAL TIP'S new Taku stick is the brainchild of multi-percussionist Taku Hirano. It's described as "a multi-functional stick that offers the durability of a medium/heavy timbale stick with the balance and rebound of a conventional drumstick, the comfort of a rubber grip (that can be used in place of mallets for suspended cymbal rolls), and a nylon-capped butt end with a steel rivet for various percussion applications."

Regal Tip has also introduced an improved line of timbale sticks, including 1/2" Changuito, 7/16", 7/16" nylon capped, 3/8", and Pete Escovedo models. (716) 285-3546, www.regaltip.com.

The PEM-500 Personal Ear Monitor from **NADY** is said to be "the first such unit to combine state-of-the-art advanced frequency-agile PLL-synthesized UHF technology and high-end performance with unprecedented affordability." (Whew!) The wireless unit offers mobility (if you ever get off the drums), portability (no heavy wedge to carry), and hearing protection (WAY less stuff going into your ears). (510)652-2411, www.nadywireless.com.

A CONSTANT WORK IN PROGRESS...



John Dolmayan's approach to the drum kit is as individual as the kit itself. John constantly seeks ways to make his kit more comfortable. "My tech and I are always switching things around, figuring out ways we can improve the set-up. The more comfortable you are with the kit, the more it becomes as natural as breathing."

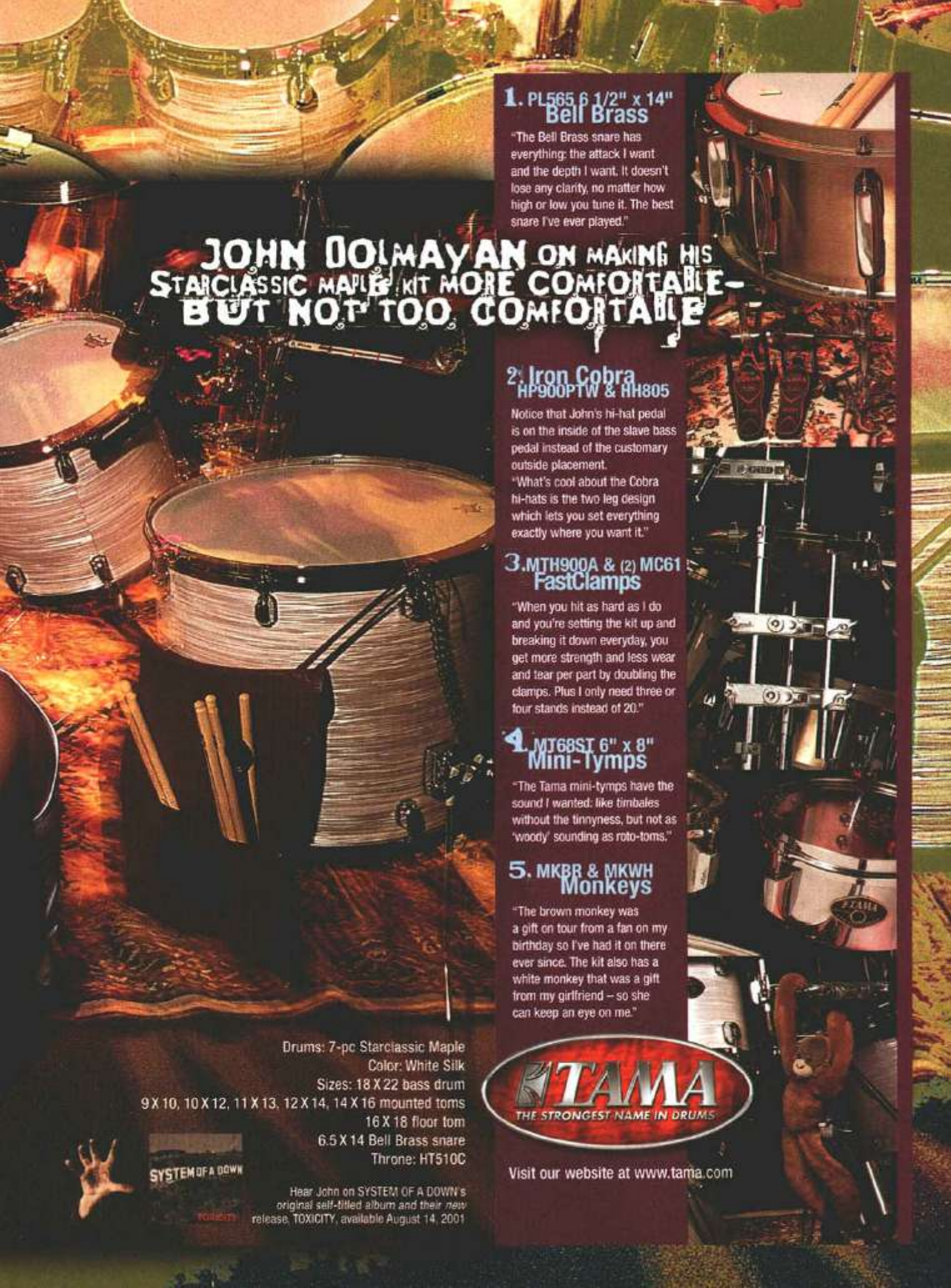
"But I also change the kit so it never gets too comfortable. In the middle of a tour we'll take a whole day literally taking the kit apart – all the clamps, everything – and start from scratch. Then when you go on stage, it's like playing someone else's kit. It's rad. I like the challenge."

"This is the configuration I've used for the last six or seven months. The left side is my percussion area, what I use for flavor as opposed to the straight drum work. The Tama mini-tymps have the sound I was looking for, like timbales, but without the tinnyness. I wanted some depth underneath that sound so I put the 16" there, and I play the three drums off of each other."

On John's mini-tymp set-up and on the rest of the set you can see how he uses two clamps instead of one. "I double the clamps on all the tom holders. When you hit as hard as I do and you're setting the kit up and breaking it down everyday, you get more strength and less wear and tear per part by doubling the clamps. Also, by using extra clamping for stability, I only need three or four stands instead of using 20."

"On the right side, I've got the 10, 12, 14, and 18. The 18 is for the really subby type of hits I need on some songs. Originally I had wood finish Starclassic Maples and they were great. But on the new album I wanted the deeper tone you get from a wrap, so I had this kit finished in the White Silk wrap from the Starclassic Performer EFX series. I was also trying for the old school look of the 60's, and I think I hit it. They look damn good."

And, of course, John could change his entire set-up tomorrow. "Switch things around, get comfortable with it and then challenge yourself by setting up differently. My drum kit is never truly finished. It's a constant work in progress."



JOHN DOLMAYAN ON MAKING HIS STARCLASSIC MAPLE KIT MORE COMFORTABLE- BUT NOT TOO COMFORTABLE

1. PL565 6 1/2" x 14" Bell Brass

"The Bell Brass snare has everything: the attack I want and the depth I want. It doesn't lose any clarity, no matter how high or low you tune it. The best snare I've ever played."

2. Iron Cobra HP900PTW & HH805

Notice that John's hi-hat pedal is on the inside of the slave bass pedal instead of the customary outside placement.

"What's cool about the Cobra hi-hats is the two leg design which lets you set everything exactly where you want it."

3. MTH900A & (2) MC61 FastClamps

"When you hit as hard as I do and you're setting the kit up and breaking it down everyday, you get more strength and less wear and tear per part by doubling the clamps. Plus I only need three or four stands instead of 20."

4. MT68ST 6" x 8" Mini-Tymps

"The Tama mini-tymps have the sound I wanted: like timbales without the tinnyness, but not as 'woody' sounding as roto-toms."

5. MKBR & MKWH Monkeys

"The brown monkey was a gift on tour from a fan on my birthday so I've had it on there ever since. The kit also has a white monkey that was a gift from my girlfriend – so she can keep an eye on me."

Drums: 7-pc Starclassic Maple
Color: White Silk
Sizes: 18 X 22 bass drum
9 X 10, 10 X 12, 11 X 13, 12 X 14, 14 X 16 mounted toms
16 X 18 floor tom
6.5 X 14 Bell Brass snare
Throne: HT510C

SYSTEM OF A DOWN

Hear John on SYSTEM OF A DOWN's original self-titled album and their new release, TOXICITY, available August 14, 2001

TAMA
THE STRONGEST NAME IN DRUMS

Visit our website at www.tama.com

Arbiter 6MM Drumkit

Arbiter kept at it until they got it right!

HITS

tuning system has been perfected

new shells are more resonant

by Rick Mattingly

I first reviewed an Arbiter drumkit with their "one touch" Advanced Tuning System in the September 1998 issue of *MD.* Although I was very impressed with the tuning concept, it wasn't perfect. I also commented that the thick 12-ply shells lacked resonance.

In the November 2000 issue, I reviewed the Arbiter Flats kit, and I was happy to find that the tuning system had been perfected to produce a consistent pitch around the entire drumhead. But the Flats didn't have any shells at all (and no bottom heads), so resonance continued to be lacking.

Now comes the Arbiter 6MM drums, which are made of nine plies of maple and are 6-mm thick. (The original, 12-ply 9-mm shells will continue to be available, but production will be limited.)

Of course, the fact that the tuning and the shell resonance have been improved poses a big problem for me. You see, a reviewer has to find *something* to be critical of, or else the review sounds like advertising copy and the reviewer is accused of being on the payroll of the company whose product he is reviewing.

Be that as it may, I can find no fault with the Arbiter 6MM drumset *MD* received for review. It was the Showman Seven kit, consisting of 8x8, 8x10, 10x12, and 11x13 rack toms, a 16x16 floor tom, a 16x22 bass drum, and a 5 1/2 x 14 snare drum. The ease and precision of tuning, combined with the thinner, more resonant shells—which feature a mounting system that doesn't require anything to be bolted onto the shells—produced a beautifully musical tone. The workmanship was flawless, from the integrity of the bearing edges to the richness of the finish.

Tuning System

For those unfamiliar with Arbiter's Advanced Tuning System, here's a brief description: Instead of several individual tuning lugs, each head has a single tuning lug that is mounted horizontally and attached to a circular metal V-clamp. The drumhead is sandwiched between two metal collars, each of which has a flange that fits into the V-clamp. The bottom collar is mounted onto a slot cut into the shell at a nodal point; the top collar also serves as the counterhoop. When the lug is tightened, the V-clamp squeezes the flanges together, thereby tensioning the head evenly all the way around. The tuning key works with a standard drumkey, but Arbiter also has a specially designed key with a sliding "T" handle that helps avoid collisions with the counterhoop and clamp.

On the original Arbiter kit I reviewed, as well as on the Flats, the V-clamp had a quick-release hinge positioned on the opposite side of the drum from the tuning lug. That quick-release hinge has been eliminated. A disadvantage of the hinge on the original kit was that the pitch of the drum changed slightly opposite that clamp point (as well as opposite the tuning lug). On the Flats kit, the tuning was pretty even all the way around, but not having that hinge probably ensures even more consistent tuning around the head.

The advantage of the quick-release hinge was that, because the lug did not need to be entirely removed, it sped up the head-changing operation. So I was curious to see how fast I could take a head off and replace it with a new one without the quick-release hinge. I found that it depended on the size of the drum. The one that took the longest was the 8x8 tom. Because the diameter of the V-clamp is so small on that drum, it doesn't have a lot of play in it—so getting it to engage the flanges of the collars was a bit tricky. Still, the whole operation only took about three minutes, and that was on my first try. It was certainly faster than unscrewing half a dozen or more lugs, switching heads, and then screwing all those lugs back in again. The bigger the drum, the easier the operation, until I got to the 16x16 floor tom and the bass drum. Those V-clamps had so *much* play that it took longer to get the clamp and the collars aligned and centered properly. But on the bass drum especially, that was still a heckuva lot faster than dealing with ten or twelve lugs and claw hooks.

The thing that saves even more time is that once a new head is on and the V-clamp is secured, getting the head in tune takes only a matter of seconds. As I said in my original review, it's like tuning a guitar string. You turn the single lug while tapping on the drum with a stick, and you can immediately hear when the head is in the optimal range for the drum. Compare that with tensioning six, eight, or ten lugs per head and all of the back-and-forth fine-tuning that's necessary, and you'll quickly see the advantage. And with the horizontal orientation of the lug, it's fairly easy to tune a bottom head while the drum is in playing position.

So the loss of the quick-release hinge didn't have that much impact on head-changing time. The drums also

have a cleaner look without it. To quote Arbiter's Ian Fraser, "They look a little less like a science project now."

About the only thing one could do to achieve *bad* tuning on these drums is to not have a good pitch relationship between the top and bottom heads, or to use heads that are completely "played out." But with a good head, it's virtually impossible not to have a drum be in perfect tune with itself.

(Wait a minute! Here's my chance to find fault!) If you're a fan of the "descending pitch" effect that was popular on tom-toms in the 1970s and '80s (which was achieved by getting the batter head in tune with itself and then significantly loosening one of the lugs), the Arbiter drums are the worst drums you could buy. They absolutely fail at achieving that effect. (There, I feel better now.)

Drums

As I already mentioned, the new, thinner shells produced more resonance than the original Arbiter drums I tested three years ago. But these are by no means the thinnest shells on the market, and I wouldn't describe the drums as excessively "boomy." Rather, they produce a very "mainstream" sound that has a good balance between resonance and articulation.

The toms were fitted with Remo white-coated Ambassador batter heads and clear Ambassador bottom heads. They produced a darker, drier sound than the original Arbiter 9-mm shells, but not so dry as to sound thin. Rather, they sounded reasonably big and fat, with enough ring for depth and projection, but not so much as to interfere with articulation of fast patterns.

The bass drum was fitted on the beater side with a Remo PowerStroke 3 batter head with a Falam Slam impact pad, and on the front with a Remo Ebony front head. Ironically, the front head of the drum we received for testing had a big "Arbiter Flats" logo. But there was nothing "flat" about this drum in looks or sound. It did verge on being "boomy," but in a very loud situation it would probably be fine. For other situations a bit of muffling might be in order to produce a softer thud. But even wide-open the drum had plenty of punch and definition. Presumably, anyone buying a 16x22 bass drum would *want* it to be loud. Such a person will not be disappointed.

The snare drum was especially nice. Fitted with an Ambassador white-coated batter and an Ambassador snare head, it was articulate, with a very fat, warm sound. The snare unit consisted of twenty spiral snares, and snare response was good no matter where I played on the top head. Rimshots had a nice crack without sounding brittle and metallic. The snare release was of a vertical-drop design. The snare adjustment screw is a bit tricky to manipulate when the release is up and the snares are engaged, but not impossible.

There is only one hole cut into an Arbiter shell: the one that serves as an air vent and receives the grommet that holds the logo badge in place. As mentioned before, the collars rest in slots that are cut into the shell at nodal points, but that don't penetrate. The collars stay in place through tension. Rack-tom mounts, floor-tom legs, and bass-drum spurs are attached to rods that are mounted to the collars and run vertically down the drum in such a way that nothing touches the shell. Undoubtedly, these are factors in the shells' resonance. But these features were all also present on the original Arbiter drums I reviewed, and they ultimately didn't make up for the thicker shells. So the new 6-mm shells can definitely take the credit for the improvement in sound.

Conclusion

Some people have dismissed the Arbiter tuning system as a gimmick. I've certainly seen my share of gimmicks over the years, and I'm generally skeptical about such things. In fact, when I first heard about the Arbiter system three years ago, I confess that I rolled my eyes and thought, "Yeah, right." But once I actually checked out the drums—even though there were some imperfections on that original kit I reviewed—I felt that the idea behind the tuning system was valid and marked a genuine advance in drum tuning.

This new kit has made me a total believer. Arbiter has taken most of the guesswork out of drum tuning, in terms of coming up with a foolproof system that ensures that every head is in tune with itself. From there, finding the optimum pitch for each drum is relatively easy. And with the new, thinner shells, the Arbiter drums produce a more resonant, flexible sound that should serve a wide variety of playing situations.

As an *MD* writer, I'm not supposed to vote in the *MD* Consumer Poll. But if I could, the Arbiter Advanced Tuning System would get my nod for Most Innovative Drum Product. And although there isn't a category called Most *Practical* Innovation, there should be—and the Arbiter Advance Tuning System should win it.

(877) 553-5596, www.arbiterdrums.com.

THE NUMBERS

Configuration:	5 1/2 x 14 snare drum, 8x8, 8x10, 10x12, and 11x13 suspended rack toms, 16x16 floor tom with legs, and 16x22 bass drum.
Shells:	9-ply maple, 6-mm thick
Drumheads:	Toms supplied with Remo white-coated Ambassador batters and clear Ambassador bottom heads. Bass drum supplied with Remo PowerStroke 3 batter with Falam Slam impact pad, and Remo Ebony front head. Snare drum supplied with Remo Ambassador white-coated batter head and Ambassador snare head.
Finish:	Black maple. (Other finishes available include red, blue, green, amber, and natural maple, and silver sparkle.)
List price:	$3,559

Pearl UltraCast Snare Drums

These stealth drums might be new weapons in your arsenal

HITS

dynamic tuning range

uncanny sensitivity

easy-to-use throw-off

sleek, stealth-like appearance

MISSES

unchromed-snare wires rattle

by Will Romano

It seems like more and more drum manufacturers are becoming hip to what classical-instrument makers have known for years: Cast metal shells produce superior resonance. When shells are cast as one thick piece of metal and then milled down to their finished thickness, they emit a multitude of voices at different dynamic levels. Pearl's hope with their new UltraCast snares is that the drums' seamless shells and minimal hardware will generate greater tonal response, precision, and versatility. The only way to find out was to get crackin'. Once we did, the results were startling.

On The Surface

The 5x14 and 6 1/2x14 aluminum cast-shell snares we were sent for review had a stealthy, armored appearance. Thanks to ten brass tube lugs, a black-lacquer finish (which can easily complement any kit color), and the silver underhoop (used to enhance the body of the shell), these drums look sleek and mechanically perfect. To top it all off, they're decorated with golden UltraCast badges that cleverly camouflage the air holes. On the surface it seems to be one tough soldier. But how much firepower—and musical diversity—do these drums offer?

Slap And Tingle

Let's take the 5" first. I followed my first instinct to play a press roll, and I was glad I did. I heard a flurry of notes, building almost uncontrollably, as if the sound was amassing in a rising squall.

Impressed by this simple test, I saw no need to change the heads that came with our review models: a Remo Ambassador coated on top and a

clear Ambassador snare-side on the bottom. I did, however, want to fiddle with the pitch. The ten stainless-steel tension rods allowed me to easily manipulate the tone. I dialed down to get a moderately deep bottom end, without making the head too slack. I was a little disappointed, feeling that the drum should have been more versatile in the lower frequencies.

Next I ratcheted it up to a higher pitch, where playing ghost notes became a sheer pleasure. Nearly every stroke was heard as I achieved a quick slap that would be perfect for James Brown funk.

Upon further inspection, I noted that the tension rods thread through Pearl's triple-flanged SuperHoop and are screwed into brass globes welded into the tube lugs. Those globes are the only part of the lug to touch the shell, thus allowing for more ring and resonance.

When I tuned the 5" to what I felt was the drum's natural frequency (a middle range), the snare emitted a quick snap and a tiny bit of ring. I used this tuning in a live setting with a blues-based rock outfit where the guitarist is equipped with a piercing Fender Stratocaster. Adding a muffling device controlled some of the ring, while the drum's natural vibrations produced overtones that added character and distinction without being annoying.

This Is Only A Test

The true test of a snare drum's multifaceted sound, I believe, is to see how it serves as a tom. I was impressed with Pearl's elegant SR-017 throw-off/vertical-pull strainer—a feature found on both UltraCast models as well as some of Pearl's other high-end snares. The vertical pull moves the snare wires up to meet the drum—not across the bottom head—to offer greater tonal clarity.

When I wanted to make the quick switch from snare to tom, I just dropped my finger down, gave the lever a flick, and...presto! I had myself a whole new texture. But what kind of texture was it? Even when the snares were down, the twenty unchromed snare wires produced an uncontrollable tingling noise. Pearl's S022NW snare wires are livelier than any chrome-plated wires I've heard. While the tension knob diffused some of the scratching, my advice would be to figure out what setting works for both snare and tom before you get to the gig. I can only imagine how unruly it could be in the studio.

It's So Heavy

On to the 6 1/2 x14 snare. Maybe it's the seamless shell. Maybe it's the fact that I love fat tones. Maybe it was the sheer volume. I'm not sure, but the 6 1/2" snare impressed me with its throaty voice and layers of thick tones. One good whack and the sound just went everywhere.

To achieve a nice, flat thud, I put a muffle ring on the drum and tuned it down a bit. While I preferred the use of the sound ring to the drum's natural resonance when tuned down, I believe either mode would be applicable for a live setting. And as they had done for the 5" snare, the Remo heads made a perfect acoustic fit. At a gig, the snare cut through the amplified instruments with ease—even as it complemented the musical goings-on.

When I tuned the drum up, it produced a clanky echo that was quite pleasing and would be perfect for R&B and soul. But, I thought, a 3-mm aluminum shell with such warm tone—more than some maple snares I've played—has so much more body to give. Why waste it on frequencies that smaller drums can (and should) easily provide?

I finally settled on a middle ground that was both meaty and booming—knowing all along that this drum could perform in a variety of circumstances. The one drawback was again the snare wires tingling, but there was no denying that wet, full-bodied tone.

The Verdict

These drums are among the most well-rounded snares I've ever played. They achieved at least one magnificent and distinct tone each, along with other tones that would be more than adequate in a variety of different musical applications. A wise investment.

(615) 833-4477, www.pearldrums.com.

THE NUMBERS

5x14: $679
6 1/2x14: $699
Both drums feature 3-mm-thick cast aluminum shells.

Paiste Innovations Series Cymbals

A manufacturing breakthrough creates affordable elegance

HITS

pro-quality sound at affordable price

classy, stylish look

powerful, cutting tones with a sweet, dark wash

by Mike Haid

Innovation is nothing new for Paiste. Their past achievements include the "wavy edged" bottom hi-hat cymbal of their Sound Edge line, as well as the classic bell-less flat ride. The new Innovations series introduces yet another first in the cymbal-manufacturing world. Paiste has developed a manufacturing technique that has produced a sonically well-balanced line of cymbals with a look, feel, and price that should entice the working drummer.

Innovations cymbals are made by a new process, which Paiste has dubbed "The Sonic Texture Formula." It combines limited mechanical pre-shaping with hand hammering and hand lathing. (The process has been granted patent-pending status by the European patent office.) Paiste has chosen to launch this new process—using their 2002 bronze alloy—with the introduction of the Innovations line.

The most visually obvious aspect of the Sonic Texture Formula is the unique, eye-catching look it gives these cymbals. It's a triple-layered design that combines the deeply embedded circular pattern produced by a pneumatic hammer with a hand-hammered appearance, finished off with a "gold chain"-style lathing process. It makes for one of the most beautifully finished cymbals on the market.

Okay, so they look good. But how do they sound?

Rides

Innovations rides include a 20" heavy, a 20" medium, and an 18" crash/ride. The 20" heavy has a solid stick attack with minimal overtone build-up. Sound definition lessens towards the edge and tends to get swallowed in the warm wash of sustain. It's a great cymbal for rock and other types of loud playing due to its ability to hold off the overtone build-up. And it has a killer bell that really carries. The underside of the cymbal has an interesting "sandblasted" look reminiscent of the Paiste Rude line.

The 20" medium is an excellent jazz ride with a beautiful warm wash and nice attack. It's a little too subtle for rock, but it has a bright, solid bell. The 18" Crash Ride doesn't have quite enough definition to work well as a ride in most musical situations. But it's very explosive when hit with authority, and would make a powerful crash under almost any circumstances.

Hi-Hats

This is where the Innovations really shine. Available in 14" medium and 14" heavy models, these hi-hats offer outstanding clarity and stick definition. If you're a player who likes to hear the "chick" and enjoys hearing the subtleties of intricate hi-hat work, you're gonna *love* these cymbals. The density of the metal alloy stands out as a positive factor in getting the most stick response out of every stroke. There's nothing "soft" about either set of cymbals. They are tight, clean, and loud. In fact, they might be a little too pronounced for small jazz ensembles. But they should work well in most other situations.

Splashes

This may be the only weak spot in the Innovations series. By only offering 10" and 11" sizes, the line doesn't provide much tonal variation. Both splashes have the same thickness, which makes them very similar in sound—with just a slight pitch difference. They are quick and bright, with almost no sustain. As such, they seem best-suited for quick, solid accents, as opposed to sweeping dynamics at various volumes of attack. They are heavy-sounding splashes overall, and they need to be struck sharply to achieve their optimum sound quality. That's not a bad thing; it's just very one-dimensional.

Chinas

The Innovations line features 16" and 18" medium China cymbals. Here again, the overall "tonal" theme of the line focuses on a heavier sound. The Chinas produce a full-bodied, powerful, and "dirty" punch. Each model offers an excellent, trashy wash, and each provides a nice variety of tones depending on the positioning of the cymbal and the angle of stick attack. They both display a rich, Oriental tone, and they really explode when hit sharply. These babies will cut through a wall of guitar amps with no problem.

Crashes

Now we're talking variety and versatility. The Innovations series offers 16" and 18" heavy, 16", 17", and 18" medium,

and 14", 16", and 18" thin crashes, along with a 16" Short crash.

The 16" and 18" heavy crashes offer a thick, dense tone with bright overtones and long sustain. These are great for loud playing situations. Overall, the mediums are still on the heavy side in general timbre and sustain. As such, they offer many of the same characteristics as the heavy crashes, but with a bit more wash and darker overtones. They'd perform well in playing situations where you need power and dynamics.

The thin models struck me as the most versatile of the Innovations crashes. The 18" thin crash actually worked better as a crash/ride than the official 18" crash/ride did—especially for jazz and light playing. All three thin crashes displayed a versatile range of dynamics in tone, response, and sustain. They all produced a balanced spread of sound with just enough brightness in overtones, mixed with a sweet, warm wash of sustain.

The 16" Short crash performed in the same versatile manner as the thin crashes. But, as its name implies, it had a slightly quicker decay. It also had darker tonal characteristics.

Lookin' Good

There is something for everyone in the Innovations line. The heavy crashes and rides should appeal to rockers. The medium cymbals still lean towards a louder style of playing, but offer more tonal possibilities than the heavy models. The thin crash cymbals come out winners in most categories, and the heavy and medium hi-hats stand out for their clarity and stick response. Oh yeah, and don't forget, these are some of the most *beautiful* cymbals on the market. Best of all, they all come with a price significantly lower than most pro-line cymbals with this level of sound quality.

(800) 472-4783, www.paiste.com.

THE NUMBERS

10" Splash:	$138
11" Splash:	$146
14" Hi-hats (pair):	$372
14" Thin crash:	$186
16" Crashes and China:	$228
17" Medium crash:	$254
18" Crashes and China:	$278
20" Rides:	$318

Peace Custom Cast And Hand Hammered Snare Drums

Economy and quality under one rim

HITS

Hand Hammered snares offer handsome looks, inviting tone, and moderate prices

Custom Cast shells are flawless and responsive

by Robin Tolleson

Just as Peace is starting to make a name for itself with entry- and mid-level drumkits, the company has jumped headlong into the upper-end snare-drum business. Judging from the four models that we inspected, Peace has the right idea with these new snare lines. The company has offered brass, maple, and stainless-steel snares in the US since 1998. They now present distinctive Hand Hammered and Custom Cast snares in various shapes, sizes, and compositions.

Hand Hammered

The Hand Hammered series delivers big-time consistency of sound—especially for the money. Peace combines an old-school design approach

Brass

with modern technology, and the result is a drum with striking looks and very appealing tones. The goal of the Hand Hammered series was to make every drumshell distinctive—with grooves in different patterns—to give each drum its own tonal characteristics. The series features 2-mm shells available in bronze, brass, steel, and copper. We were sent brass and copper models to try.

The brass-shelled 4x14 model has an open, almost rattly sound at times. The brass shell produces a bright, ringing tone, which I felt the need to tune down for more body and a bit more control. The brass shell "breathes" with the vibration of the drum as it's played, producing lively but focused sound when reined in just a little. It's got a dynamite rimshot that might deliver a little more punch in the upper range than a 51/2" drum would. Triple-flanged hoops on the drum offer great cross-stick possibilities.

The 5 1/2x14 copper-shelled snare is a delight right out of the box. Totally under control, the drum gives a good low-end wallop, a crisp attack with depth, and good cross-stick and rimshot sounds. This drum responds to the player like a fine sports car. It delivers body and presence at low volumes, and delivers more the harder it's struck. I took this drum out on blues, fusion, and church gigs, and it sounded right for each style.

Copper

Custom Cast

Custom Cast snares are made by starting with a 12-mm-thick shell cast from solid aluminum or phosphor bronze. A computer-controlled lathing system is employed to mill that casting down into a seamless 5-mm-thick metal shell.

The Custom Cast Phosphor Bronze 5 1/2x14 snare could be nicknamed "the ton of fun." I hesitate to say that I injured myself getting it out of the box, *but....* It is heavier than any cymbal bag I've ever stuffed full.

But this drum is *worth* its weight in precious metal. The drum has a big sound just waiting to be brought out, yet it offers the sensitivity of a steel shell. In fact, it sounds a good bit like a fine wood snare. It delivers everything you could want, including a variety of good rimshot and cross-stick options. Providing you have a sturdy stand (and a solid stage floor), you could use this snare with confidence to conquer numerous musical situations.

The 4x14 Custom Cast aluminum snare produces a great Steve Jordan-ish rimshot crack. This drum has the cleanest sound of the four we tested. When struck dead center, its shallow depth might prevent it from delivering the mid-range air movement that a rock player is looking for. But find the rimshot sweet spot, and they'll hear you in the next town.

The aluminum snare has that naturally tight sound that's just right for funk and jungle grooves. Yet it would also be a great snare for use in an orchestra or on a jazz kit.

Bronze

Aluminum

Other Features

Attractive tube-style lugs give the Peace drums a handsome look. The snare strainers are nothing fancy, but they're simple and serviceable. (The throw-off lever on the 4x14 Custom Cast sits a bit higher than the rim, which might cause awkward moments during cross-sticking, depending on how you position the drum.)

Peace also claims that they have improved their coated snare heads. The new heads are made for Peace by Dupont, and they have the look and agreeable sound of coated Ambassadors.

Conclusion

The folks at Peace knew what they were doing when they decided to market these snares. They are attractive in appearance, sound, and price. As such, they compare favorably with some of the "big boys'" snares.

(877) 999-4327, www.peacemusic.com.tw.

THE NUMBERS

4x14 Hand Hammered Brass	$ 229.99
51/2x14 Hand Hammered Copper	$ 359.99
4x14 Custom Cast Aluminum	$ 829.00
51/2x14 Custom Cast Phosphor Bronze	$1,159.00

PureSound Percussion Snares

Get wired for sound

HITS

excellent handmade construction quality

bring out drums' high and low frequencies

warm up overall tone

MISSES

a little pricey

by Fran Azzarto

I know what you're thinking: When your snare wires break or start to sound funny, just run down to the local music store and pick up a new set. All you need to do is decide whether you want the ones with a lot of wires or the standard set, and make sure they fit your drum. Right? Well, this couldn't be further from the truth now that PureSound Percussion has released their newest line of custom snare wires.

PureSound offers four series of custom snare wires, along with three types of mounting accessories. We received two types of snares, the Varitone Variable Tone Snare Wire System and the 221 series.

Varitone Snares

The Varitone system incorporates light-, medium-, and heavy-gauge wires in sixteen-strand sets, offering drummers different acoustic options. I tried all three on two different snare drums: a 1984 10-lug, 5x14 Ludwig metal Supraphonic, and a 1988 10-lug, 5x14 Noble & Cooley Solid Shell Classic single-ply maple shell with reinforcement rings. Let's see how these wires sound.

I first put the snares on my venerable Ludwig, thinking, What can custom snare wires really do to my sweet Supraphonic, which has served me so well throughout the years? Well, how about make what I thought was a good-sounding drum sound not good, not better—but *amazing!*

Starting with the light-gauge wires set at a medium tuning and using Ambassador batter and snare-side heads, the quality of sound was drastically improved. PureSound recommends that the light gauge be used for orchestral, jazz, and studio applications. I agree. The sensitivity I experienced when playing a quiet double-stoke roll was truly incredible. The drum part to "Bolero" also sounded great. When I loosened up the snares, the low end of the drum was brought out and a fatter sound was achieved.

The Varitone medium-gauge snares were even more of a pleasure to play around with. At low, medium, and high tunings, the medium-gauge produced a warm, gutsy, snappy sound, with no annoying buzzing on the decay. As you can guess, the heavy-gauge snares provided more of the same but with a bigger sound, making them less applicable to low-volume playing. Long live rock!

221 Snares

Next I threw on the 221s. Can you say *"Wow"?* The sound they produced was actually shocking at first. But in a short time it felt very comfortable. The 221 model utilizes a 2-to-1 coil design. Each of the eight strands is made up of a pattern of two long coils and one short coil. The chubby, growling sound was so unusual that everyone who passed by my rehearsal studio wanted to borrow the drum for his or her session. The sensitivity was still there with all types of tuning, and the drum never seemed to choke or lack snap.

On The Other Drum

I went through the same process with the Noble & Cooley drum, with pretty much the same results. The Varitones and the 221s both brought out the high and low frequencies of the drum, with a quality of sound that's well worth their higher cost. So the next time your snare wires break or sound funny, think before you grab those $10 replacements. PureSound Percussion offers some great alternatives.

(310) 966-1176, www.puresaundperciission.com.

THE NUMBERS

Varitone snares (all gauges):	$39.95
Varitone 3-pack:	$99.95
221 (one gauge):	$42.95

GK Music SuperPhones And UltraPhones

When it comes to rehearsal, drummers are faced with two volume-related problems (in addition to complaining neighbors). First, playing a drumset in a confined area generates high noise levels that can damage your hearing. Second, many drummers practice along with recorded music. The problem here is that it's hard to hear the music over the wash of drums bleeding into your phones. Unfortunately, the natural tendency is to crank up the phones in an effort to override the drums...leading us back to pain, suffering, and hearing damage. A similar situation can often exist in the studio. Imagine four or five angry musicians trying to hear their cue mix over the blazing drumset right next to them. Besides stuffing the drummer into an iso booth (Boo!), what's to be done?

SuperPhones

GK Music to the rescue! Their first tool in the fight against banishment to the dreaded drum booth was their original DrumPhones, which coupled inexpensive Walkman-type headphone drivers with the sort of earmuffs worn by shooters and aircraft workers. I bought four pairs of DrumPhones several years ago, and while they've been a boon to my hearing (and that of my bandmates), they had a couple of weaknesses that showed up over time: The drivers would blow under high volume, and the thin cords were prone to breakage. These problems were solved with the advent of the DrumPhones II (still currently available), which are fine for home use. But as far as I'm concerned, the real news is introduction of two "pro" models that GK Music is now manufacturing.

Pro Models

The two high-end models are the SuperPhones and the UltraPhones. The similarities? The drivers. Both use speakers from the Sony 7506 studio monitor headphones (which are among the industry standards). The differences? Everything else. Let's check it out.

Sound: Even though they use identical drivers, the SuperPhones and UltraPhones have slightly different sonic personalities (again proving the adage that with speaker systems, the enclosure is as important as the driver itself). The SuperPhones have a hair more mid-bass, probably because the drivers are mounted in such a way as to put them in closer proximity to your ear. However, they don't seem to have quite the high-frequency extension of the UltraPhones, which I would characterize as having a very clean and clear sound. Although both of these headphones sound very nice, neither model sounds *exactly* like a pair of 7506s (which utilize a very different, non-sealed enclosure). The UltraPhones come closer, having more of that "studio quality" sound due to their increased transient response.

Both models have an impedance of 63 ohms, meaning that while they won't melt under high power like cheap 8-ohm drivers, they'll still put out decent levels when driven by the small headphone amps built into most CD players (In contrast, my 600-ohm AKG K240 phones only put out a moderate level with my CD player's headphone amp cranked up to 10)

UltraPhones

Comfort: The SuperPhones are physically configured similarly to the DrumPhones, being built into moderate-sized earcups that place the driver padding up against your ears While not uncomfortable, this gives them somewhat of an "on-ear" (vs "over-ear") feel, which can get a little sweaty during long sessions The UltraPhones are built into larger and deeper earcups, such that—unless you've got ears like a bloodhound—your entire outer ear fits inside the earcup, which then seals against your head While bulkier, I found this configuration to be very comfortable

Isolation: The SuperPhones provide 20 dB of noise reduction, while the UltraPhones offer 29 dB. Not much to debate here...or is there? Actually, yes. If you're playing in a miked-up situation (stage, studio, or rehearsal) and you can feed some of your drum sound back into the phones, then more isolation is better. However, if you're primarily going to practice (unmiked) along with a CD, then I'd consider using the SuperPhones. The reason? The UltraPhones provide so *much* isolation that it's hard to hear your unmiked drums over the music. Used simply as hearing protection during practice, either model will provide more than enough noise reduction to keep your hearing intact (with the UltraPhones being so effective that they may actually block out quiet ghost notes).

What You Hear Is What You Get

Granted, nothing is going to sound better or be more comfortable than a pair of featherweight studio headphones. Unfortunately, you can also seriously damage your hearing by driving such phones hot enough to keep up with a drumset, because they provide almost no isolation. (To quote Pete Townshend, regarding the cause of his legendary hearing problems: "Headphones! Headphones! Headphones!")

With their SuperPhones and UltraPhones, GK Music has come up with comfortable, good-sounding, pro-quality headphones that provide *serious* noise reduction. No, they aren't cheap. However, not only will they make your current rehearsals and sessions much more comfortable, they just might make it possible to still hear what's going on when you're an "elder statesman" of drumming. Check 'em out!

(800) 747-5545, www.GK-Music.com.

THE NUMBERS

SuperPhones:	$179
UltraPhones:	$219

Both models come with a vinyl carrying case, a straight/coil cord, and an 1/8"to 1/4" adapter.

Mark Parsons

Gregg Bissonette & Mapex Orion...

Out in Front

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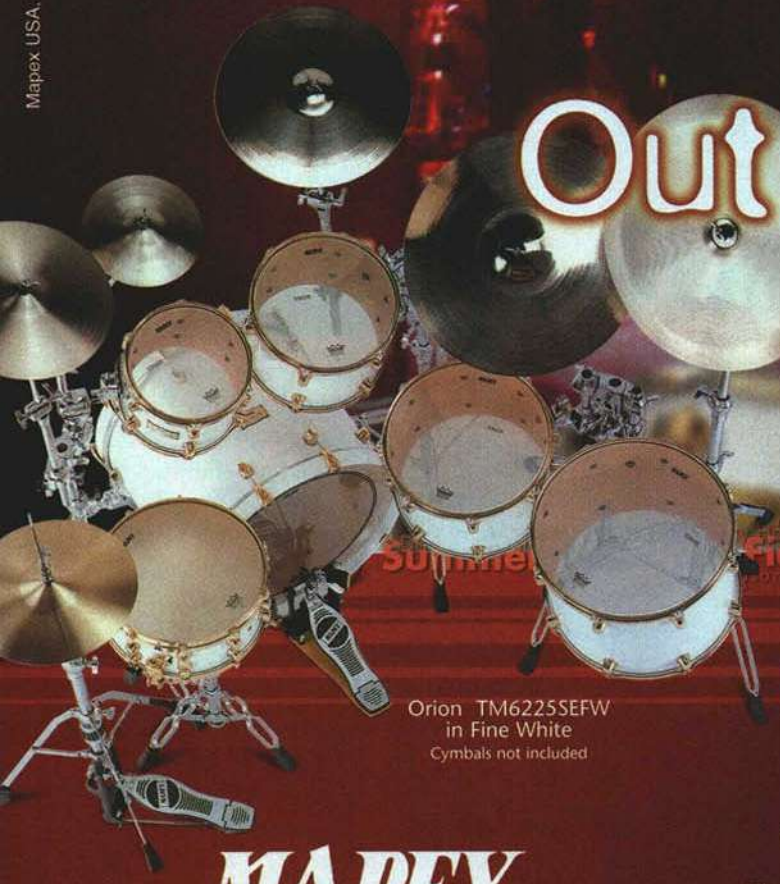

Orion TM6225SEFW
in Fine White
Cymbals not included

Being *Out in Front* is Gregg Bissonette's reality. Whether recording on the multi-award winning *Supernatural* album with Carlos Santana, TV scores for hit series *Friends* and *King of the Hill*, or performing live with the Lukather-Carlton Band, Gregg counts on the warmth and projection of his Mapex Orion set.

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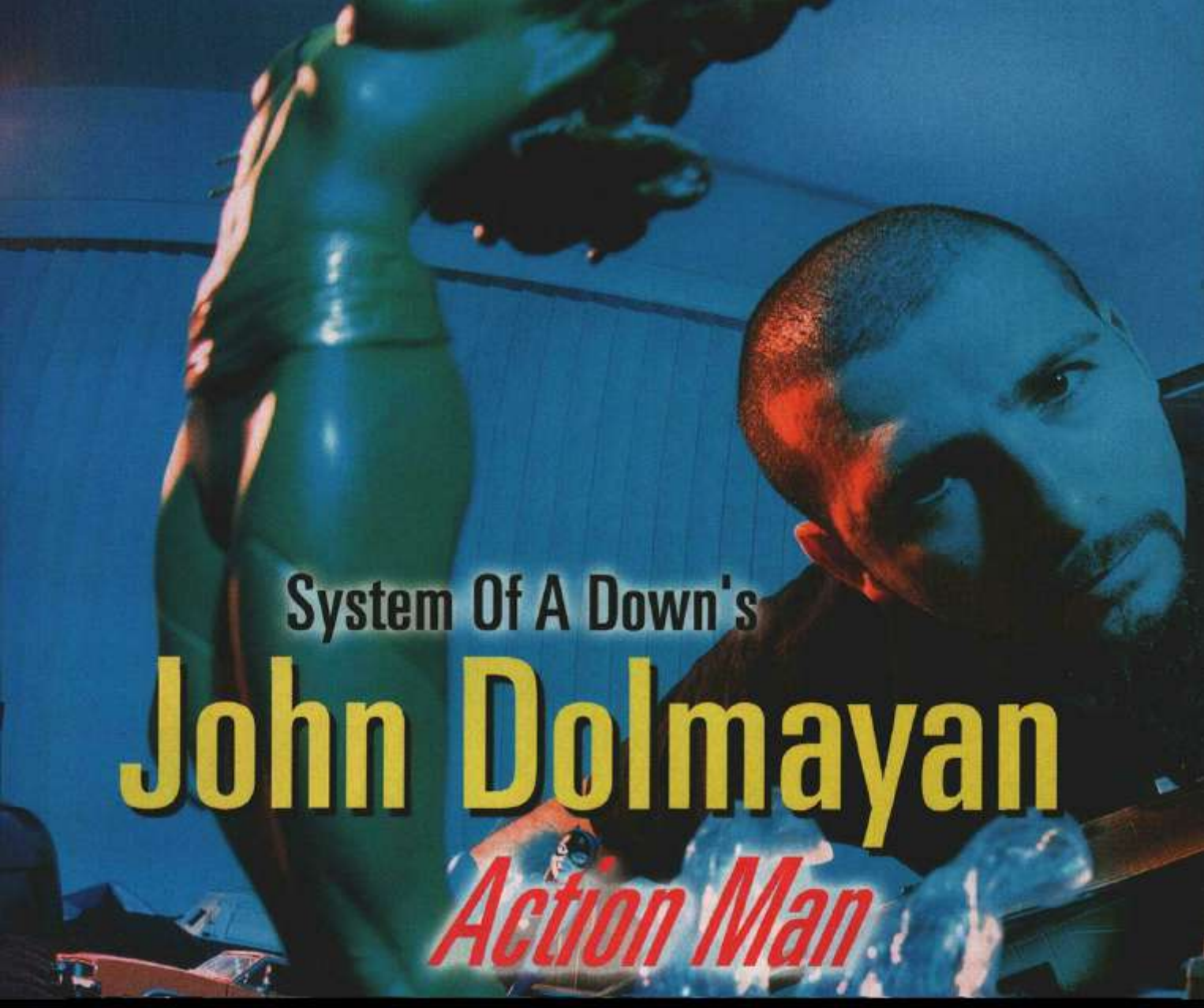


System Of A Down's

John Dolmayan

Action Man

It's a hot Friday afternoon at Frank & Son's Collectors in City Of Industry, California, and John Dolmayan is busy unloading a truck, box by box, crate by crate. No, the twenty-eight year old drummer for the gold selling band System Of A Down hasn't been abandoned by his roadies. Today, Dolmayan is appeasing the other beast that resides in his soul — the comic book and action-figure jones he has indulged since childhood. Before Slayer, Maynard Ferguson, Billy Idol, and The Dickies, Dolmayan's obsessions were dominated by The Dukes Of Hazzard, Lord Of The Rings, Saint Of Killers, and Tron.

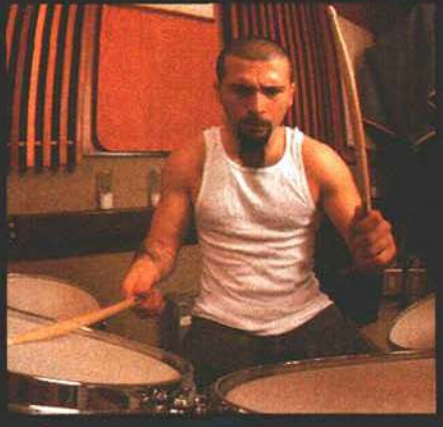
If Dolmayan had to choose one action figure to return as, he would be the invincible Wolverine. "He ages slower than normal men," explains Dolmayan, while assembling the booth where monthly he displays his comic and action wares. "Wolverine is impervious to disease, and he has an Aeamanathium skeleton, which is unbreakable. And he's invulnerable. I have many experiences ahead of me and things I want to achieve. I want to live a long time - like Wolverine."

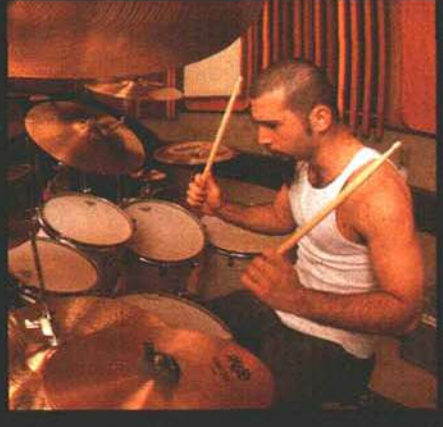
If immortality can be found through a rock band, Dolmayan may yet attain his goals, as of this writing, System Of A Down's debut has sold 750 000 conies. A diverse, bruising, brawling epic of thirteen songs, System's first record reflects not only influences like Frank Zappa, Tool, and freakish polka-rock, but a serious observance of the band's collective Armenian heritage. Songs like the swing-infested "Sugar," the Zeppelin-at-the-circus metal spree of "Suggestions," the zippy march shuffle of "D-Devil," the odd-time mayhem of "Soil," and the pummeling blast of "P.L.U.C.K." relay more than simple musical muscle.

System Of A Down was originally called Victims Of A Down, but these musicians are victims no more. All System songs are rants against injustice and ignorance . Their main focus, however, is exposing the holocaust that the Armenian people suffered early in the twentieth century.

Born in Lebanon, Dolmayan has seen his fair share of bloodshed and battle, and that, along with his rather serious demeanor and mighty drumming, make him the perfect fit for System Of A Down's tired-by-fire metal marauding. With outrageous singer Serg Tankian, guitarist Daror Malakian, and bassist Shavo Odadjian, Dolmayan rounds out System as the sobe straight man to their extreme faces of fury. His playing is inspired. It's no wonder that hoards of young drummers are naming him as a major influence.

Story by Solc Ken Micallef • Photos by Alex Solca





On their debut, Dolmayan's drumming replicated the bandmembers' drastic rhythms and hairpin-turn tempos. But with their latest release, *Toxicity,* System and Dolmayan create something closer to *Quadrophenia* than *Sabbath, Bloody Sabbath.* with no fewer than thirty-two songs to choose from, System's new album is one dizzying, delirious ride. It seems that each song has numerous, ear-bending rhythm changes, all navigated by Dolmayan with the ease and power of a welterweight.

Or would that be Spiderman?

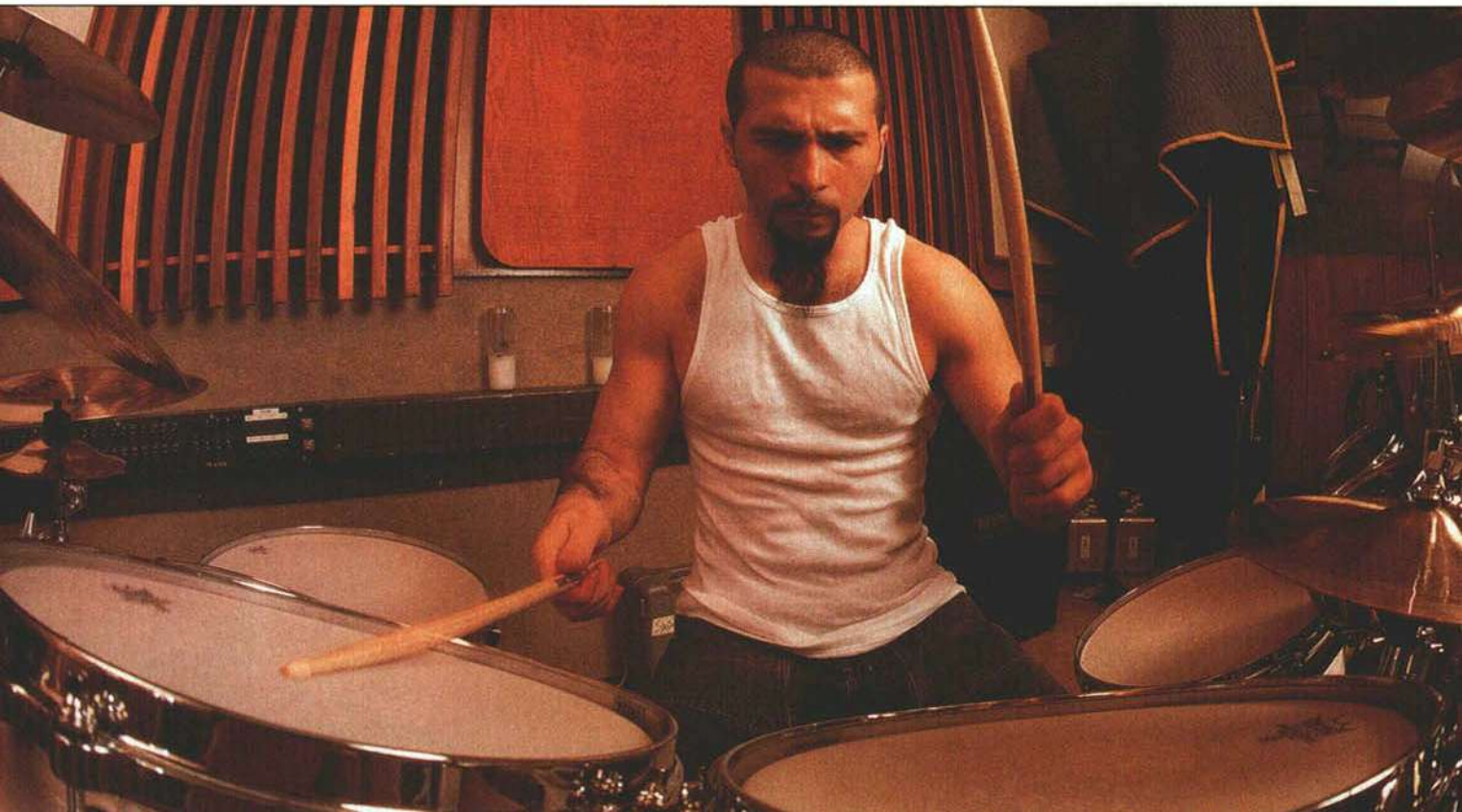
"Version 7.0" recalls the brawn of Rage Against The Machine. Dolmayan's frenzied 16th-note rolls lift "X" from Rush-like prog sections to beat-it-with-your-fist blast ballistics. He rips out convincing double bass opportunities on the hardcore "Prison Song." The monosyllabic grants of "Fuck The System" are matched by yet more furious blast drumming. Following that is the mellow extravaganza of "Atuva," accompanied by Dolmayan's luxurious groove of ghost notes and somersaulting tom and bass drum combinations. "Science" displays the band's "rock 'n' roll roots," says Dolmayan, while "Ariels" recalls "the power ballads of Journey." And even *Zappa* gets his due in the nutty time tussles of "Johnny" and "Chicken Stu."

But the most beautiful song on the album features percussionist Arto Tuncboyaciyan in an Armenian folk song accompanied by Indian flutes, hand drums, a dark melody, and a full vocal choir. This "Intro To PJ's" reveals the heart of System Of A Down.

Back at the drummer's impressive North Hills home, Dolmayan shows off his incredible collection, which includes classic video arcade games like Tron and Terminator 2, as well as a closet full of Japanese Manga, original comic art and cells, and valuable action figures such as The Thing, Punisher, God, Doctor Doom, and Iron Man. A battered set of '70s Ludwigs sits out in the garage like broken-down warriors.

As we are discussing his latest find, a beautiful young woman exits the bathroom, smiles at John, and takes her leave. John doesn't miss a beat, leading her to the door with gentlemanly grace. He may be serious, but Dolmayan is no brute. Above his bed is a large lithograph of four illustrations with the words "Discipline, Work, Faith, Solitude" outlined below. These are core to the Dolmayan creed.

"Discipline is important because in order to achieve anything, you have to have a work ethic," he relates. "Anything you're going to do in life will take work. If something's handed to you, you won't appreciate it. Faith is faith in yourself. In order to accomplish your goals, no matter how lofty they may seem, you have to have faith in yourself. And solitude is one of my basic needs. You need to be tranquil in yourself to accomplish anything in life. You need solitude, peace, and harmony within yourself."



MD: In all of your band photos, you look like a very serious character.

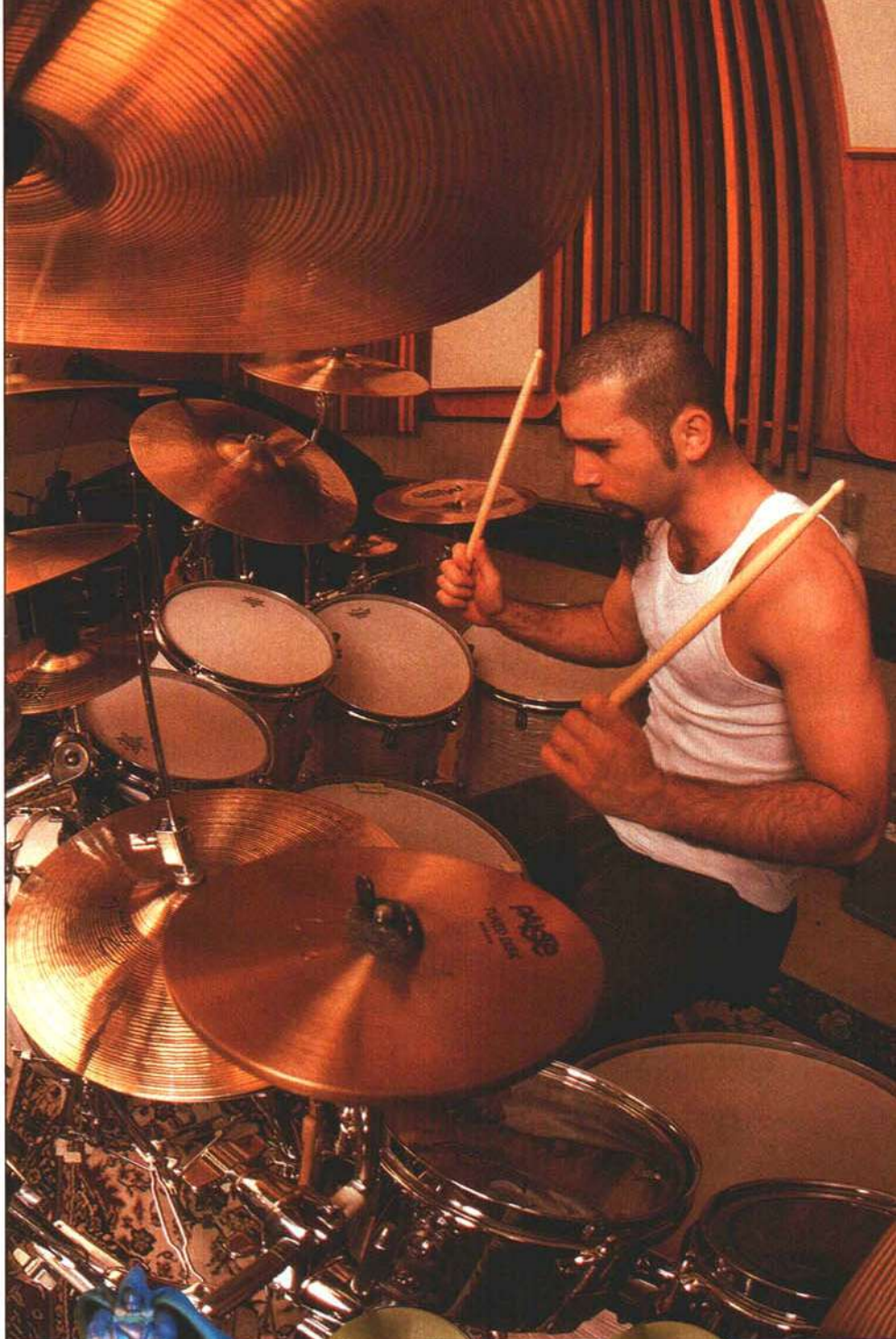
John: I just *look* like a serious guy—some people think I look like a character from *American History X.* I just look mean; people have been saying that to me since I shaved my head. I always get grief for that. I may look serious, but I'm not. Look, I'm into toys and comics. I'm always in a good mood—well, most of the time.

MD: Do you have a serious, determined approach to being a musician and drummer?

John: Yeah, ever since I was two years old. I've always been a drummer. My father was gigging in both Lebanon and Canada when I was a kid, and I'd go on stage and mimic his drummer. I would find my way to the front of the stage and they would perform around me.

MD: Your dad played Armenian and Arabic music as well as jazz?

John: Yeah, I heard all kinds of music growing up. My mom listened to classical music. Then when I was about twelve, I was introduced to rock 'n' roll. But my parents wouldn't let me play drums until I was fifteen. They knew that was what I wanted to do. Every year for my birthday I wanted a drumset. They knew I'd become a musician, but my dad wanted me to do some-



System Setup

Drums: Tama Starclassic (maple) in white silk finish

A. 16x18 floor tom
B. 2x6 and 3x8 steel Mini-Timbs
C. 5 1/2x14 maple snare (or 61/2 bell brass)
D. 9x10 tom
E. 10x12 tom
F. 12x14 tom
G. 14x16 tom
H. 18x22 bass drum

Cymbals: Paiste Signature

1. 18" Fast crash with rivets
2. 6" bell chime
3. 14" heavy hi-hats
4. 18" Full crash
5. 10" splash
6. 8" splash
7. 20" Full crash
8. 20" Power ride
9. 8" bell chime
10. 18" Power crash
11. 18" Power China

Hardware: All Tama, including an Iron Cobra hi-hat stand (HH805), double pedal (HP900PTW), and First Chair throne (HT510C)

Sticks: Vic Firth 5B model

"Drummers have to do all they can to make the songs they play sound great, and not just the drum parts. There are a million amazing drummers who have come and gone, but people will always remember a great song."

thing else, to be able to raise a family. Being a musician is a hard life. How many great jazz drummers in New York City are driving cabs?

MD: You were born in Lebanon. Do you remember the war there?

John: I remember Lebanon being very beautiful. I also remember the battles, running around in the streets afterwards and picking up bullets. Back then the battles weren't that scary because I had experienced them from birth. If you hear bombs coming down and bullets firing all the time it becomes normal.

MD: What made you leave?

John: One night in 1976 I was crying and my folks put me in their bed to comfort me. Two minutes later a bullet came through the wall and landed in *my* bed right where my head would have been. My dad was like, "We're outta here." Two weeks later we were in Cyprus, and then Canada. But even then I wanted to be a drummer. My dad had already put out three albums under his own name. It was international music. My dad still plays a lot of Armenian events.

MD: You are Armenian but born in Lebanon?

John: Yes. If you're Jewish and the holocaust was denied you, you'd be upset. Well, we're not Jewish, but our genocide did occur at the hands of the Turks, and the world doesn't acknowledge it. A million and a half of our people were brutally killed. This holocaust hasn't been admitted to by the Turkish government, because the US backs them up. We need their oil and military bases over there. But France has recently passed resolutions recognizing our holocaust and we continue to work on it.

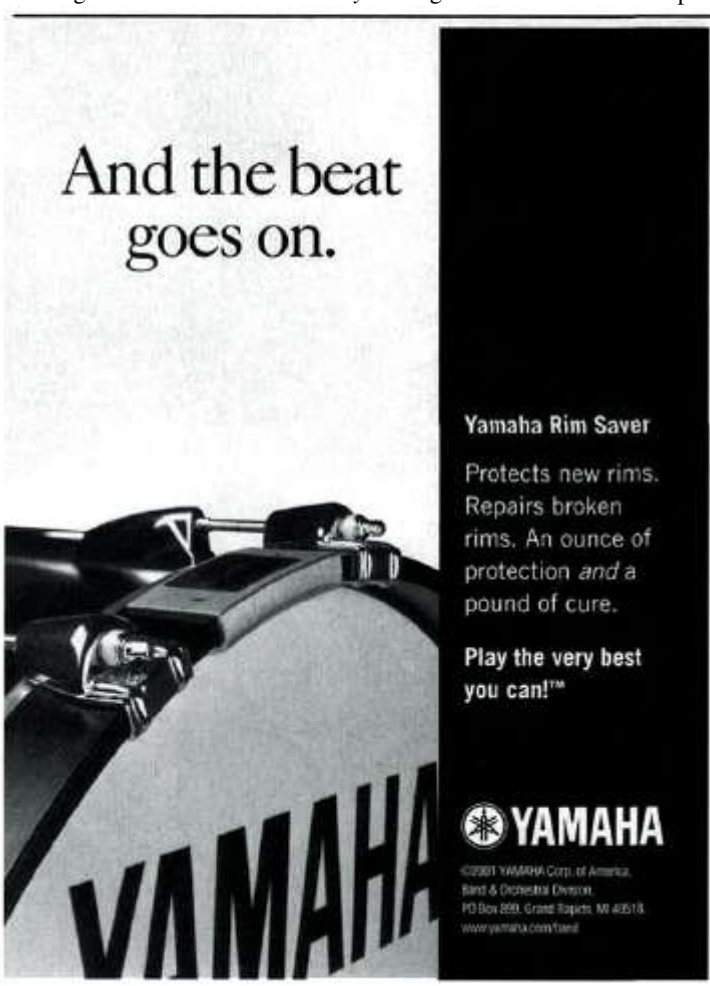
MD: And that influences the band's music?

John: There are a lot of elements being addressed in our lyrics. We're not afraid to attack topics of political or social interest or bring to light wrongs that are happening today, like East Timor or Africa. People are being massacred and it's all over money.

MD: See, you *are* very serious.

John: I have to put my energy into the band to make us as successful as possible. I don't mean driving a Bentley and making millions. I'll take it, but that's not our goal. The goal is to make music that people will still listen to when we're gone.

MD: How has being such a serious and



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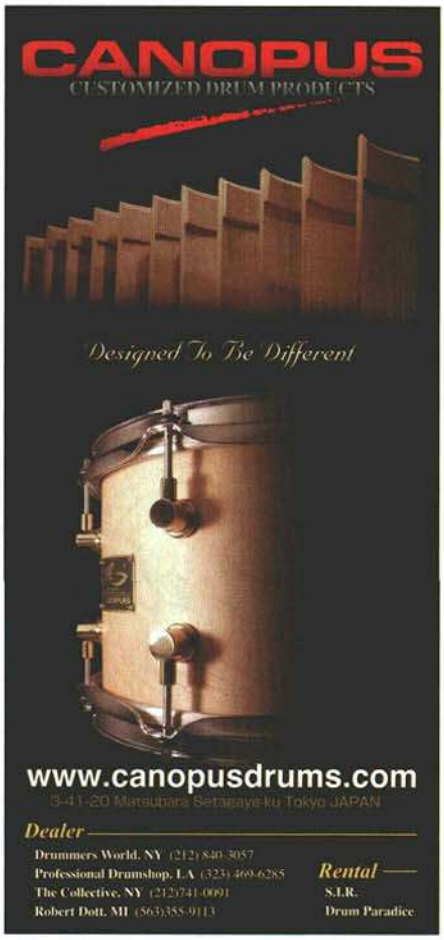


John Dolmayan

driven person impacted your drumming?

John: I treat it with great respect and I am humbled by other drummers' abilities, which always make me strive to be better.

MD: The band's material really features you. How do you all write the tunes?

John: The bulk of the material is written by our guitarist, Daron Malakian. Serg Tankian and Shavo Odadjian also write. I don't really write, not yet at least.

MD: But the music is very rhythmic, with many tempo changes, and you, the bassist, and guitarist often play rhythms in unison. Are you trying to match their parts rhythmically?

John: Most of the time I'm trying to match up with them and be very precise. My main goal as a drummer is to make the songs as good as possible, not necessarily make the *drums* as good as possible. Whatever the song needs is what I'm going to do. Ten years ago I was into having the drums shine more than anything else, but that's selfish. If you want that, become a soloist.

MD: With the new album, the band has progressed on many levels. The musicianship is even more powerful than it was.

John: We know each other better, and we've been on tour for three years. We slept in the same beds when we began. When the RV broke down, all we had was each other. Two things can happen when you're on tour: you'll either learn to hate each other or you'll learn to love each other. Well, we've done both! [laughs]

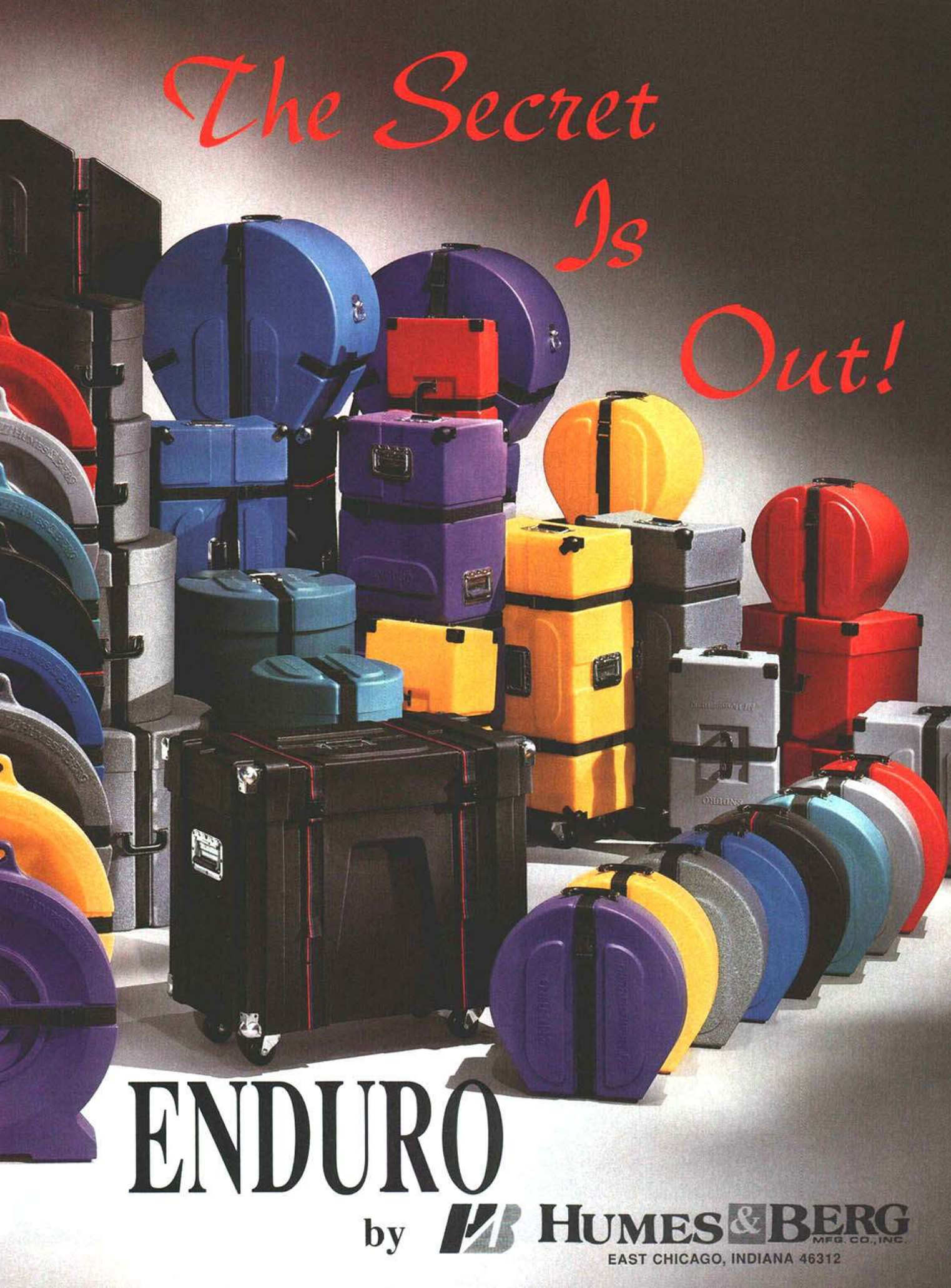
MD: Getting back to your background, you mentioned getting your first real drumset at age fifteen.

John: Yeah, my dad finally got me a used Rogers kit. Then I got my Ludwigs, which I played for ten years. Great drumset.

MD: What were the first records you played along to?

John: I only had a couple of lessons; my real teachers were albums. I learned my timing from Billy Idol's *Vital Idol* [a greatest-hits collection]. I would also put the radio on and play to any song, not knowing what it was. I've always had a knack for that. I would put on whatever I could find and play it from beginning to end—The Dickies, Iron Maiden, Rush, Slayer.

Then I found my dad's jazz albums. Who's this, Stan Getz, Miles Davis,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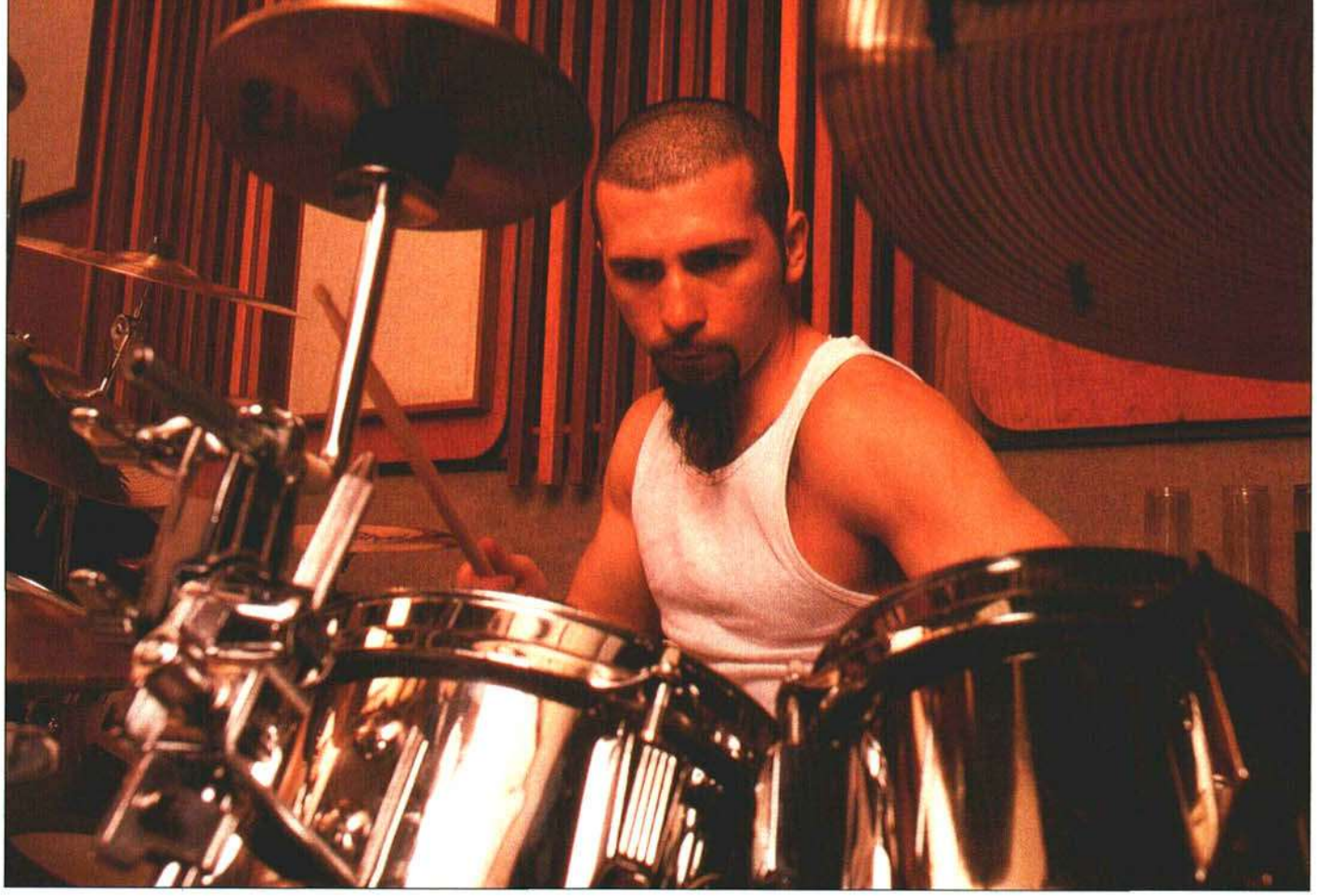


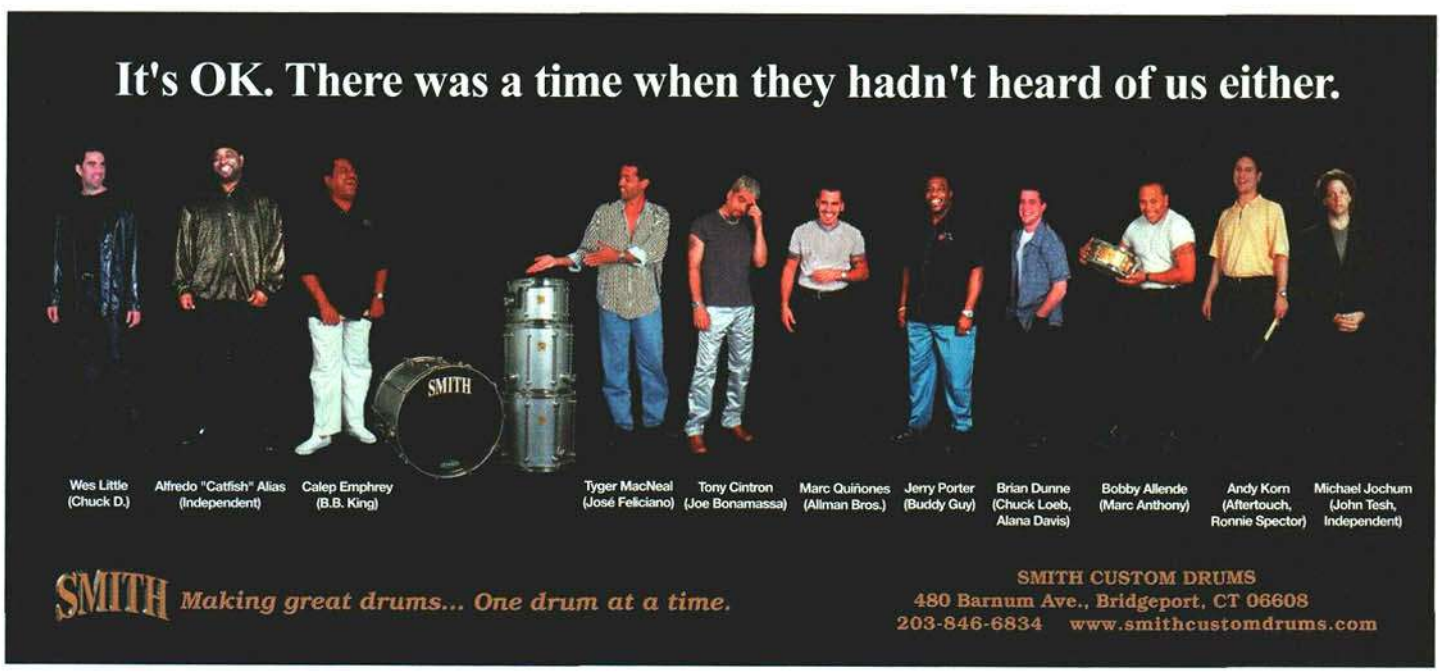
Maynard Ferguson, Al DiMeola? This music blew my mind. "Let's try that." Whatever my dad had, I would sit down and learn how to play it, and that's really how I learned to play drums.

MD: Being a musician himself, what advice did your dad give you?

John: "Practice, practice, practice." I played by myself constantly for two years. I gave it everything I had. I would put on The Who and play "Baba O'Riley" ten times. Then Guns N' Roses, The Police, and Peter Erskine on Maynard Ferguson's *Carnival* album. He's one of my favorite drummers ever. And I loved Dave Brubeck and Charlie Parker. I played along to everything and tried to carefully listen to exactly what the drummer was doing. I couldn't catch everything, but I came up with my own way of doing things.

MD: But you took a couple lessons.

John: The most important thing I learned from private lessons was the bossa nova. I was also shown the proper way to play single- and double-stroke rolls. I had this teacher named Dmitri, a fusion drummer who played with my dad. One day he showed me a bossa nova, and I was like, What is *that?* It was tricky at first. I watched him do it for five minutes, then I sat down



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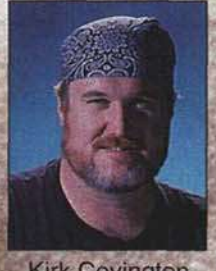

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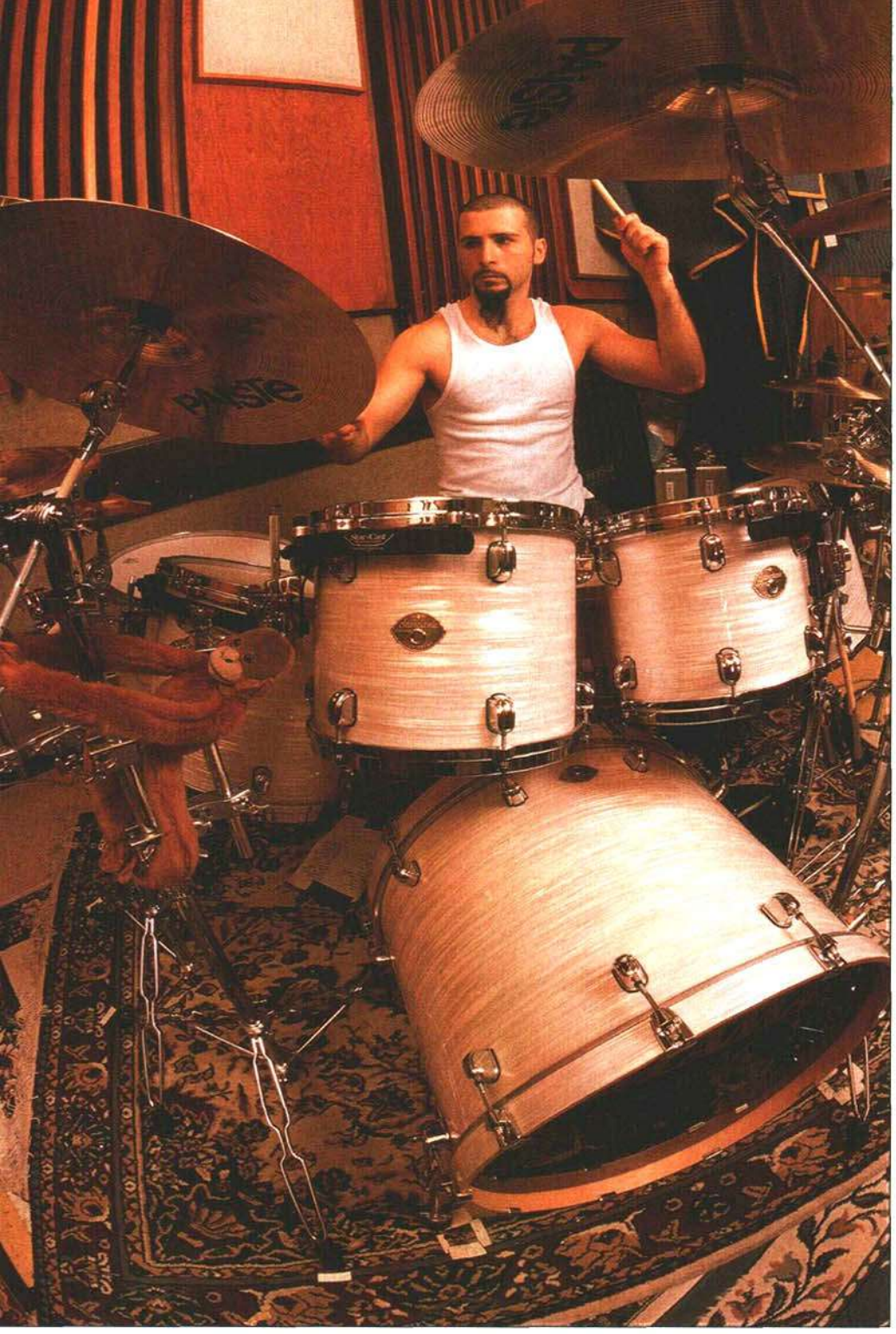

John Dolmayan

and got it in another five minutes.

Armenian music has a similar vibe to some Latin things. It sounds easy to play, but it's deceptive. It's not in 4/4. But I went from that bossa nova and began listening to a lot of Latin music. That was a big influence on my playing.

MD: What led to System Of A Down?

John: My first band was all instrumental fusion, but not very good. The second band had a singer, but these guys were hippies from North Hollywood, which is where my family had moved to. All that band played was Hendrix. I wasn't too into it until I heard the stuff Mitch Mitchell played with Hendrix. Great drummer. Then it was a different story.

MD: Did you play jazz?

John: No. We just incorporated jazz into rock. We took a little taste *of jazz,* classical, and Latin and melded it into our form of rock.

MD: Like System does now.

John: I've always basically done this, but System is just a heavier version of that. I don't know how to define what we do.

I did that Hendrix gig for two years. That led to a few other bands, but I was improving fast. I was practicing *all* the time then. I worked a day job, practiced every day, and rehearsed with bands every night.

MD: What was your day job?

John: Pepsi, UPS—thirty different jobs. I worked hard. But I had my musical goals and there was nothing else in the world for me. There was no other option for me. And the guys in System are the same way, Daron especially. He's the most driven person I know. He lives and breathes music.

MD: So you were playing LA clubs....

John: Yes, and I developed good time then, playing with two different bands and practicing on my own. I learned a lot about

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SYSTEM OF A DOWN

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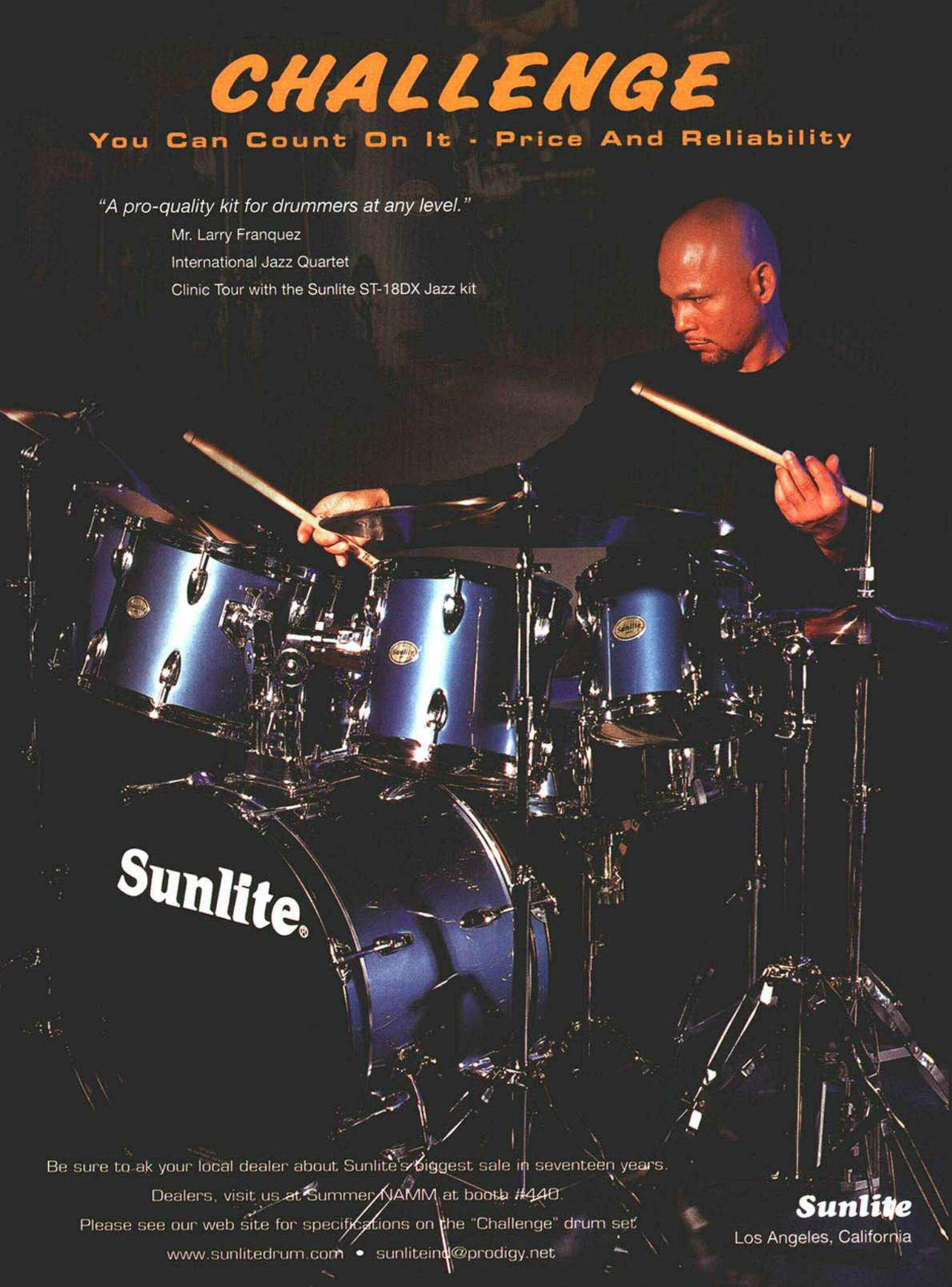

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Then I played in a band called Middle Earth for three years, and I thought this was the band that was gonna make it. Our last bass player had played in Soil, which was Serg and Daron's band. That was how I met System, around 1995. System wasn't happy with their drummer, and Middle Earth wanted to play more pop music. I can't play Mariah Carey music—that would be an insult to whatever talent I have.

I got along with the guys from System, and we shared rehearsal space. Well, when they fired their drummer they asked me to fill in. The first time I played with them, it just worked. I had never experienced that kind of magic before.

MD: How many years did System play LA before you were signed?

John: I was with them a year before we got signed in '97. At that point all of our shows were sold out. We were creating havoc. We really meant what we were doing. It wasn't contrived. The music was strong and people felt it.

There's nothing else like our band out there. We're influenced by Slayer, The Beatles, and even *Zappa*. Plus we're all very into hip-hop and early NWA. That makes for a pretty interesting combination.

MD: You have to play hard in this band.

John: Very hard. I play a lot of rimshots. I also have a couple of different techniques I use to get louder or different sounds out of

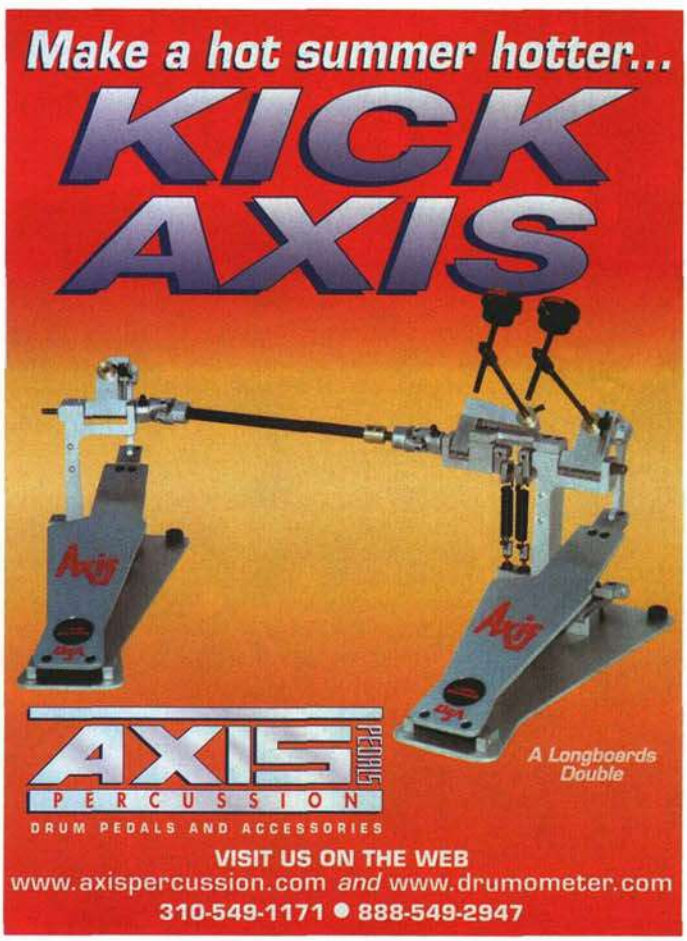
Down But Not Out

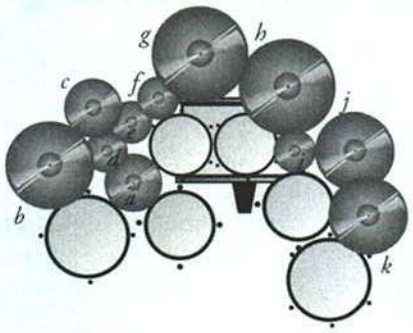
These are the recordings John says best represent his playing,

Artist	
System Of A Down	Toxicity
System Of A Down	System Of A Down
various	Chef Aid: The South Park Album ("Will They Die 4 You?")
various	Nativity In Black II ("Snowblind")
various	Scream 3 soundtrack ("Spiders")

And these are the ones he listens to for inspiration.

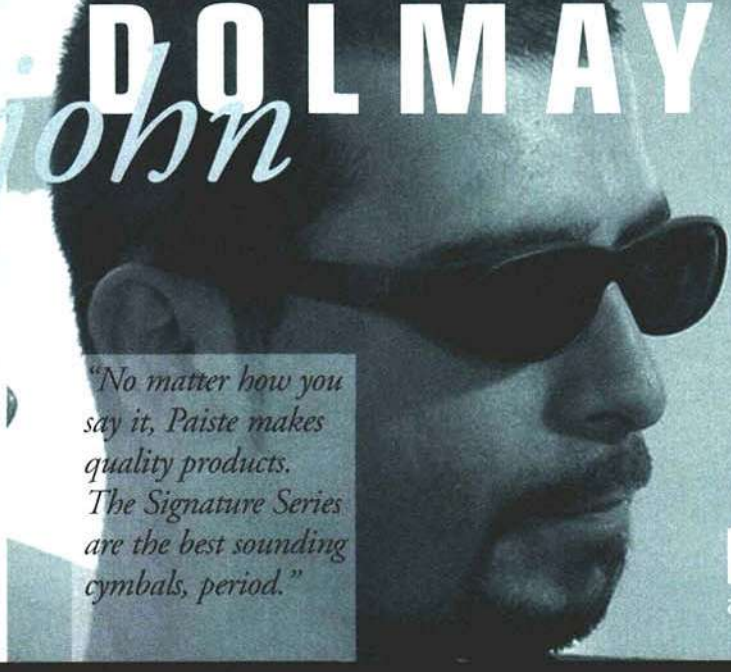
Artist	Album	Drummer
Dickies	Killer Klowns From Outer Space	Karlos Kabellero
Al Di Meola	Elegant Gypsy	Steve Gadd
Maynard Ferguson	Carnival	Peter Erskine
Rush	Hemispheres	Neil Peart
Led Zeppelin	Physical Graffiti, III	John Bonham
The Who	Quadrophenia	Keith Moon
Santana	Abraxas	Michael Shrieve
Slayer	South Of Heaven	Dave Lombardo
Frank Zappa	all	various
Iron Maiden	Powerslave	Nicko McBrain
Black Sabbath	Sabbath IV	Bill Ward
Deep Purple	Made In Japan	Ian Paice





a) 14" Signature Heavy Hi-Hat
b) 18" Signature Thin China
c) 18" Signature Full Crash
d) 6" Bell Chime
e) 10" Signature Splash
f) 8" Signature Splash
g) 20" Signature Full Crash
h) 20" Signature Power Ride
i) 10" Signature Bell
j) 18" Signature Power Crash
k) 18" Signature Heavy China

john DOLMAYAN



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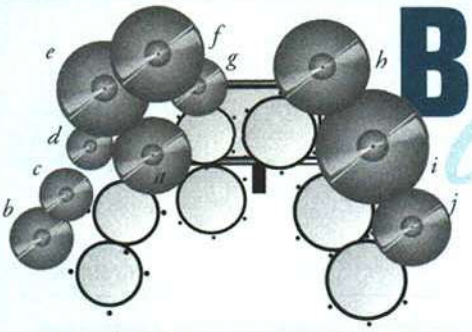
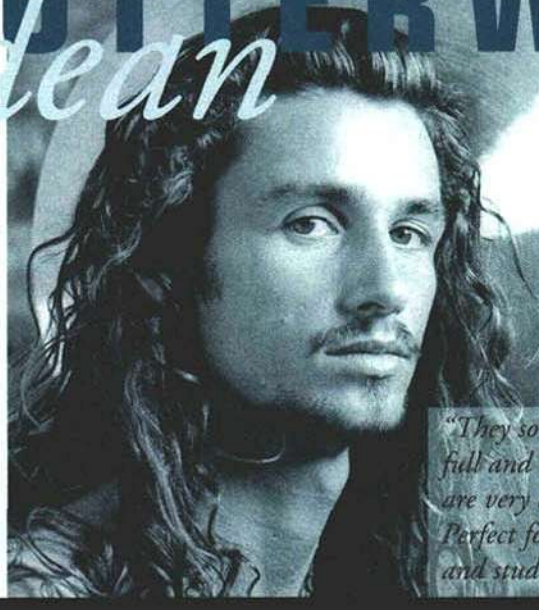


a) 15" Dimensions Power Hi-Hat
b) 16" Dimensions Thin China
c) 9" Dimensions Thin Splash
d) 8" Dimensions Thin Splash
e) 16" Dimensions Medium Thin Crash
f) 17" Dimensions Medium Thin Crash
g) 10" Dimensions Thin Splash
h) 18" Dimensions Medium Thin Crash
i) 22" Dimensions Power Ride
j) 17" Dimensions Medium Thin Crash

dean BUTTERWORTH



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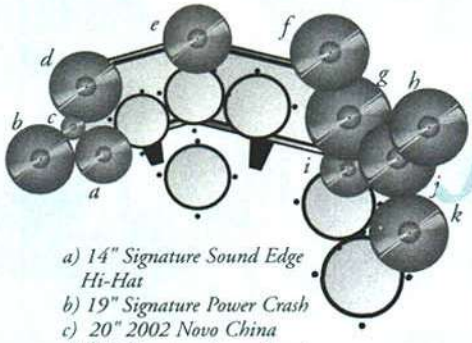

a) 14" Signature Sound Edge Hi-Hat
b) 19" Signature Power Crash
c) 20" 2002 Novo China
d) 20" Signature Power Crash
e) 19" Signature Power Crash
f) 20" Signature Full Crash
g) 22" Signature Power Ride
h) 20" Signature Dry Crisp Ride
i) 15" 2002 Sound Edge Hi-Hat
j) 20" Rude Ride/Crash
k) 20" Signature Heavy China

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"Don't be limited by the cymbals you play."

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CYMBALS SOUNDS GONGS

the drums, like playing close to the rim of the snare drum or the toms—getting them to "bark." Sometimes I'll play the drums dead center. Tight ghost notes sound good in the center of the head. But I like to move the sticks around.

MD: What do the guys want to hear from you?

John: They expect a lot, but I don't have a problem with that. Sometimes it'll just be a vibe, a heaviness to a certain section, or something wacky and very unexpected. We did thirty-two songs for the new album, and they're not traditional songs. I couldn't play traditional parts.

MD: What were your considerations for the drum sound after the experience of the first album?

John: I wanted the toms to stand out a little bit more and resonate more. I wanted the snare to be tighter and the kick to have more bottom to it. I'm basically using the same tools to achieve this, but we're using a different tuning technique.

On the last album I used clear Ambassadors on top, but this time they were coated. That gives you a warmer sound. I always use coated Ambassadors on the top of the snare. I wanted the toms to have almost a Pink Floyd type of resonance, but it's hard to get that when you're playing fast.

MD: Going back to the first album, were you happy with the drumming on it?

John: No. I wish we'd recorded that album after touring for a couple of months. But I'm never happy with any recordings I've done. I'm not totally happy with the new album. But at a certain point you have to let it go.

MD: But the new record shows a lot of growth. It's in-your-face and much tighter.

John: I was more comfortable in the studio this time. We did a good job. I don't have many regrets. After hearing some of the songs completed, I think a couple of them are too fast. But overall things came more easily, and I wasn't self-conscious. We joked a lot with [producer] Rick Rubin. It was a good vibe.

MD: What did Rubin say to you about your drumming?

John: He made me feel at ease and confident. He did feel that some of my fills weren't necessary, so I cut back a little bit. But then in "Version 7.0," where I played quite a bit, he loved what I was doing and didn't change a thing.

MD: Did he ask you to use a click?

John: We don't use a click. To me, your timing shouldn't be perfect all the time. I am not a robot drum machine. I'm a human being with emotions. I don't have perfect time. Besides, clicks dehumanize the music.

MD: Would you ever get into electronics or loops?

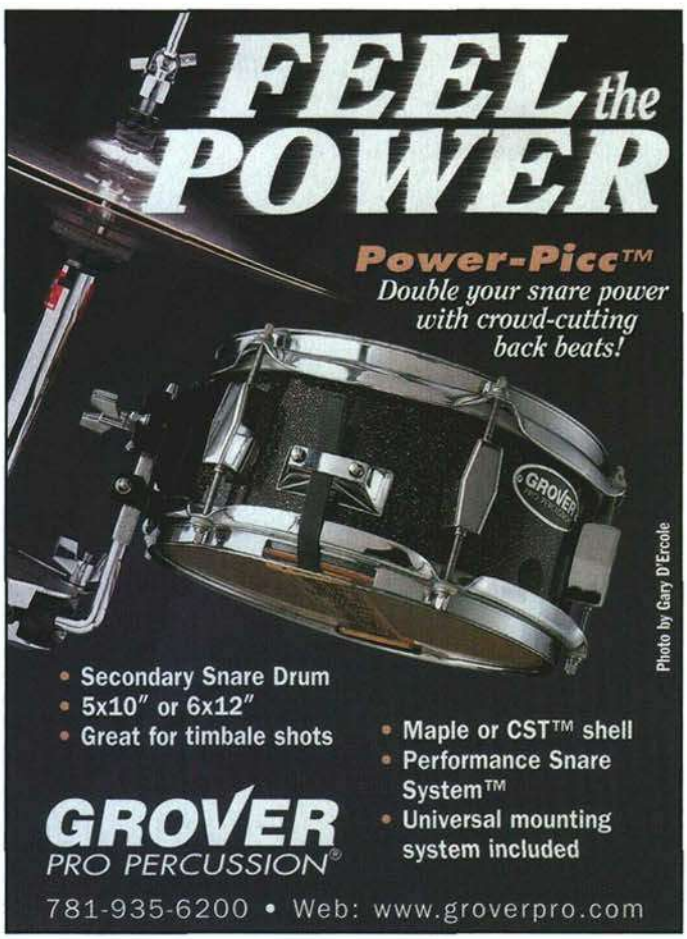
John: I would, as long as they're only *enhancing* what we're doing and not taking over. You're gonna hear drums from me, not from a computer.

MD: I've heard that a lot of drummers come to you asking questions about what you do.

John: I get a lot of questions about how I play so fast. But I don't feel that I play that fast. I try to be accurate. Drummers also ask me about my feel, but that's a hard one to answer. I think it all comes from the music you've been exposed to.

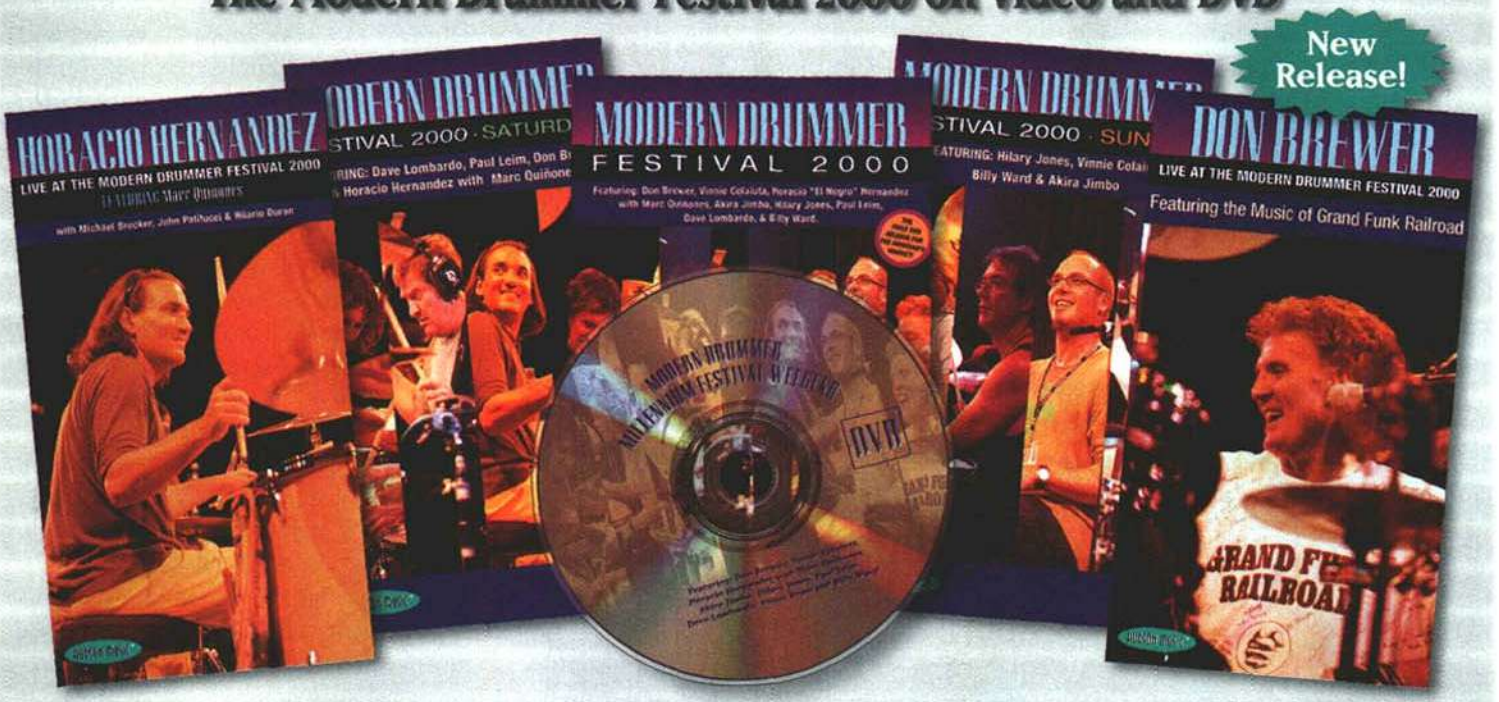
I tell drummers not to limit themselves by listening only to drummers for inspiration. You can learn a lot about rhythm from a bass player—or listening to the wind. You should be open to anything that will inspire you to do something different on your drums.

I also try to make the point to drummers



ENCORE PERFORMANCE.

The Modern Drummer Festival 2000 on Video and DVD



Produced and directed by **Hudson Music's** creative team of **Rob Wallis** and **Paul Siegel** (founders of DCI Music Video™), the **Modern Drummer Millennium Festival Weekend Video Collection** now includes four videos and the world's first and only drumming DVD. **Festival Weekend 2000/DVD** (170 minutes) is a modern drumming breakthrough that contains all the performances presented on both the Saturday and Sunday Festival videos. *In addition to instant access to each performance as well as digital-quality sound and picture, you'll experience a 5.1 Surround-Sound mix while being able to switch between different cameras using the "DrumCam"option.* **Festival 2000 Saturday/Video** (80 minutes) includes excerpts of Saturday's great performances by **Tony Medeiros, Street Beats, Dave Lombardo, Paul Leim, Don Brewer, Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez & Musical Guests** (featuring **Marc Quiñones**) plus backstage footage, interviews, and more! **Festival 2000 Sunday/Video** (90 minutes) features great moments from Sunday's show, including performances and interviews with **Mike D'Angelo, Akira Jimbo, Billy Ward, Hilary Jones and Vinnie Colaiuta & Karizma**. **Horacio Hernandez: Live at the Modern Drummer Festival 2000/Video** (65 minutes) presents the fiery "El Negro's" complete performance with an incredible band brought together exclusively for the event, including special guest percussionist **Marc Quiñones**.

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that they have to do all they can to make the songs they play sound great, not just the drum parts. There are a million amazing drummers who have come and gone, and few people remember them. But people will always remember a great song.

MD: How would you say your playing has progressed since you've been in System?

John: My timing is a lot better and I am more relaxed. I want it to get to a point where I don't think of anything. Instead of trying to come up with an impressive part, I should be thinking about playing from the heart.

MD: In "Prison Song," you play fast rolls and double bass patterns. Did you work those up for that song?

John: It came naturally. My double bass is not as strong as I'd like it to be. That's what I'm working on now. I practice it by playing along to Slayer albums. I've been working on singles, and recently I began focusing on paradiddles with my feet. Sometimes I play heel up, sometimes heel down. It depends on how hard I hit.

MD: Where does your snare drum sit in relation to your waist?

John: I always have a bruise on my thigh from hitting the snare, if that tells you something. I sit up high. It keeps my back straight and gives me more control. Plus my legs have more gravity on their side. I have the weight of my body working with my leg instead of against it.

MD: What are your goals beyond System Of A Down?

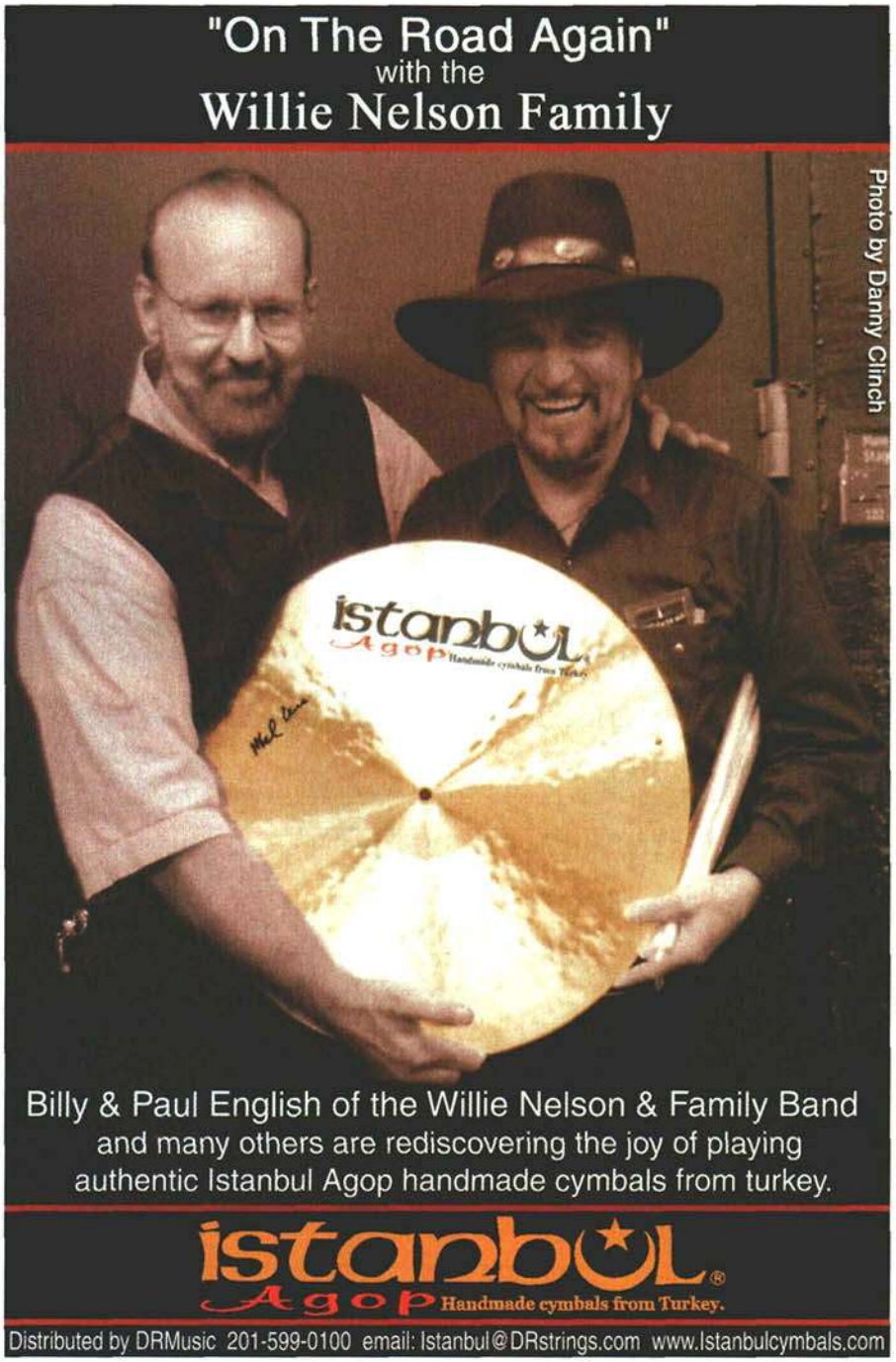
John: I want to make a fusion album, something without vocals. I want to invite different drummers and other musicians to play on it with me. I have a long "wish list" of players, guys System has shared bills with.

MD: What's the best thing about success?

John: Getting to play shows every night. Just being able to play all the time, whether in front of a hundred people or ten thousand people. Just being able to play.

MD: And having one beautiful girl exiting the back door while another comes in the front door....

John: No, it's not about that. But it is amazing how good-looking you become the bigger your band gets.



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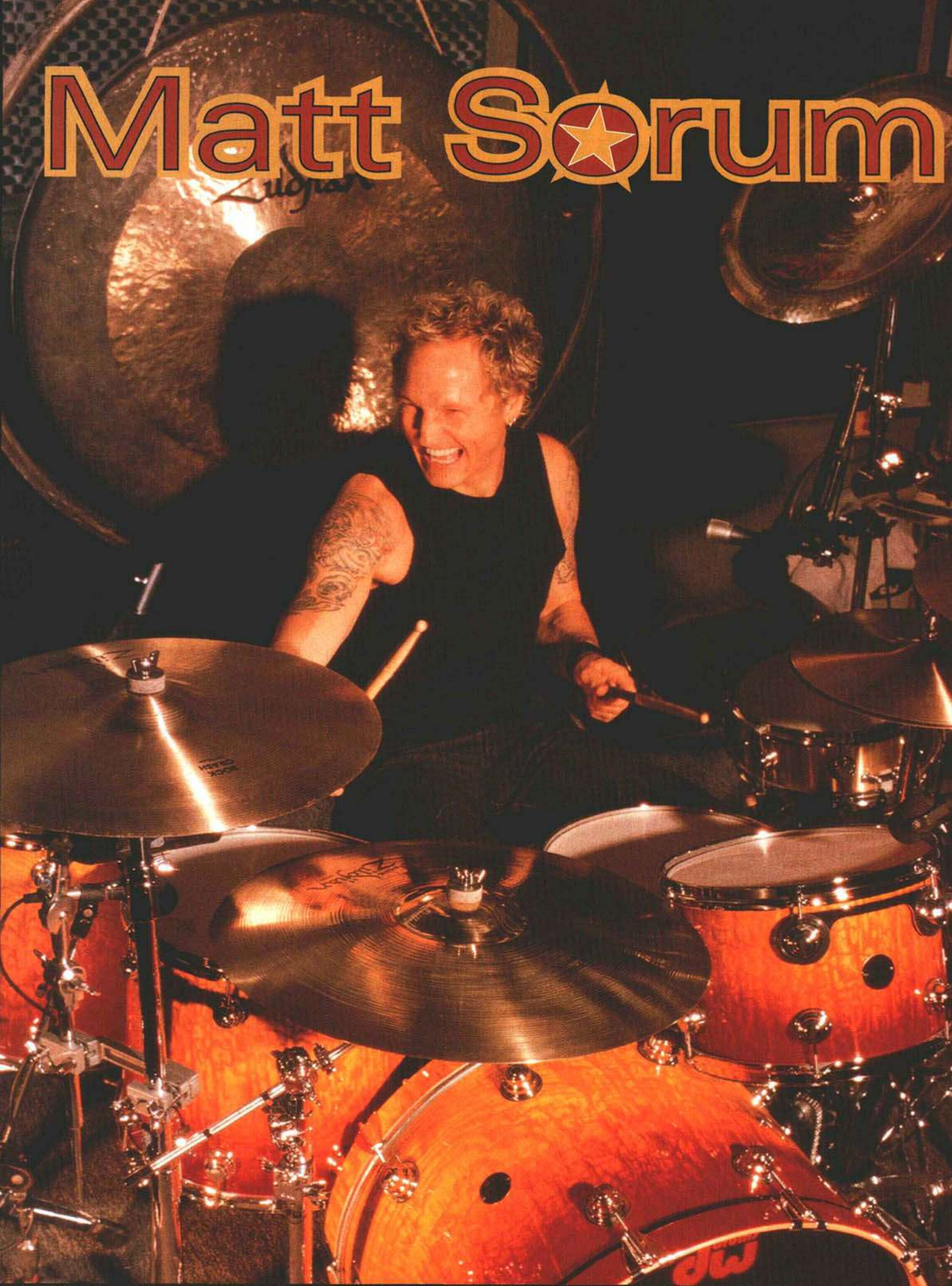
Matt Sorum



Surviving Super Stardom

Story by Robyn Flans • Photos by Alex Solca

Matt Sorum is feeling great these days. The past decade brought him great notoriety and financial comfort. But it also provided him with invaluable insight and important life lessons.

Sorum had strayed far from the high school student who was consumed by drums, who played in jazz ensemble, marching band, and the Mission Viejo High School Drum Corps, and who practiced at home to early Genesis and Gentle Giant records. Eventually Matt got into drummers like Billy Cobham, Lenny White, and Tony Williams, but rock won out. By the time he was fifteen, the young drummer was playing the club circuit in Hollywood, sixty miles north of where he lived. Upon high school graduation, Matt moved to Hollywood on his own to pursue a career in music.

Although Sorum did some sessions in the '80s for such artists as Eric Carmen, Gladys Knight, Belinda Carlisle, and Spencer Davis, his true love was honored when he hooked up with The Cult in the late '80s. But then, after a year and a half, Sorum was invited to join Guns N' Roses, a situation he *knew* he couldn't turn down.

From 1990 to 1997, Sorum lived every drummer's boyhood dream—success, luxury, fans, huge audiences, and all the trappings. They were exciting yet tumultuous years that created problems he hadn't anticipated. After taking some time to regroup and come back down to earth, Matt is now involved with a diverse array of projects including producing several artists, recording a solo album, and touring with The Cult after recording their latest release, *Beyond Good And Evil.* It's a good name for a record—and could almost be the title for where Matt's been since we last caught up with him.

MD: At our last interview, in 1991, you were just about to embark on your first Guns N' Roses tour. What was that whole experience like?

Matt: My first show with them was at a huge stadium—175,000 people. I had played big gigs with The Cult in the late '80s, but this was something else. I remember Axl had his guy call me at the hotel right before the gig, "Matt, Axl would like you to do a drum solo tonight." So I thought, "Okay, I'm going to do a drum solo in front of 175,000 people! I'm in Brazil, they love drums. If I get into more of a rhythmic, group participation sort of thing, it'll be effective."

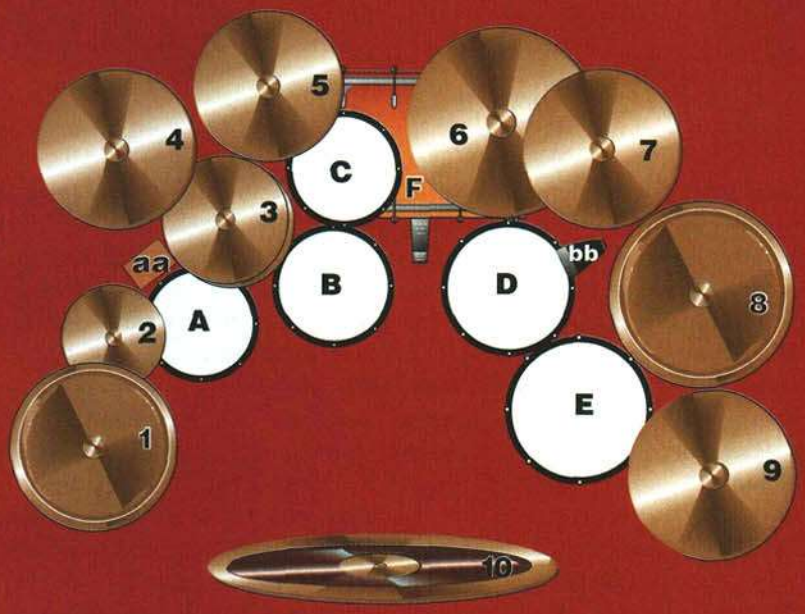
So Axl introduced me as the new guy—"The Assassin," he called me—and all of a sudden about fifty spotlights hit me. I launched into every drum solo lick I ever knew. Fifteen minutes later, I was still going—the sound, the PA, the *people* made it seem so surreal. I thought about when I saw John Bonham at the Forum and all the great drummers and drum solos I'd seen back in the day.

I remember kicking quarter notes on the bass drum, standing up and clapping my hands—and there were 175,000 people's arms up in the air clapping with me. They kept clapping, so I soloed to that. Then I kicked the band into "You Can Be Mine," which had that big drum intro. We did two nights, and the second night I soloed even longer. I remember looking over to the side of the stage and Axl was standing there, ready to come back on, and I was thinking, Hey man, you can wait. I soloed every night after that.

The band really embraced me and took me seriously as an integral part of what they had become. It brought me a lot of notoriety as a rock drummer. And it was wild. After that tour, I was *famous*—people knew my face, I couldn't go out. I'd be in different countries and couldn't leave the hotels. I got chased by people. I remember getting off the airplane in Japan and there were a thousand kids waiting there at the airport. When we went to Rio for the first time, I was instantly recognized because we had seven top-10 singles on the charts. When we got there, it was basically like being The Beatles. Things got really crazy. We were flying around on a private 727 jet. I had my own bodyguard and bag guy. We all had our own limos! We did two and a half years of stadiums, and it was huge. And my life

"I remember kicking quarter notes on the bass drum, standing up and clapping my hands—and there were 175,000 people's arms up in the air clapping with me."

Matt's Cult Kit



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Hardware: All DW, including a double pedal with felt beaters (medium spring tension)

Heads: Remo CS Emperors on snare batters with Ambassadors underneath (no muffling), coated Emperors on tops of toms with clear Ambassadors underneath (no muffling, tuned for maximum tone), PowerStroke 3 on bass drum batter with Ebony Ambassador on front (DW pillow used for muffling)

Sticks: Zildjian Matt Sorum model

Electronics: drumKAT used for triggering loops

Microphones: Shure

changed.

MD: How so?

Matt: I got very rich, very quick. A lot of people came around, people who weren't really my friends, and I got caught up in the wild ride.

MD: Looking back on it now, what do you think of all that?

Matt: I think I lived the dream of every kid who wants to be a drummer in a rock 'n' roll band. A lot of the reason I got into drumming was because of Ringo Starr. And I grew up emulating great rock drummers—Roger Taylor, John Bonham, Ian Paice, and Ginger Baker. And I remember, at fifteen, seeing Roger Taylor get out of a Rolls Royce in Hollywood with a few pretty girls. I remember honestly liking the craft of drumming, but I remember being very excited about what came with it. They were boy dreams. So when I eventually got to that level of success, all those things came true—and more.

MD: Was it good?

Matt: Good and bad. I got very confused about who my friends were. My trust level sort of changed, and I got out of focus. I became someone who was always "on." G N' R was at such a level that everybody wanted a piece. Of course, there was a ton of money, and then all of the egos became involved. It's traditional with great rock bands—all the same garbage you see on VH1 's *Behind The Music.*

MD: But when you see that on VH1, don't you think, Those changes will never happen to me, I'm going to stay the same?

Matt: I think I stayed the same in certain areas, but I definitely felt like I needed to be "Matt Sorum the rock drummer guy" all the time. I wasn't able to step out of that or separate it from my regular life. I felt like it was a major part of who I was, and if I relaxed a little bit, I wouldn't keep that edge. It was a whole lifestyle with that band, and it wasn't about being a great musician or getting on stage with other great musicians.

Guns N' Roses had a certain kind of energy about the way we did our business. There were all those stories about Axl and the way things went on within the band—all the bickering and political situations. A lot of it was true. It was a very turbulent time.

Axl used to make us wait for hours before we went on stage. You can imagine

being a drummer getting ready to go up before 50,000 people, but you don't know when to turn on. The show time is 9:00 and Axl would show up at 10:30, so your adrenal glands are pumping and you're constantly on edge with this nervous energy, and he keeps you on edge. I think somewhere deep inside he knew that was part of how he got this amazing rock 'n' roll energy out of the band. When we hit the stage, a lot of times we were pissed off at each other. I wouldn't even look at him. Then he would leave us on stage and take off. I'm sure everyone has heard about the stuff that went on. It was nuts. We'd go into these ten- or fifteen-minute jams waiting for him to come back.

We never used a set list. I remember, in particular, doing two sold-out shows at Giants Stadium and being in the little golf cart on the way to the stage going, "What's the first song?" Axl didn't say anything to me. "Come on Axl, what's the first song?" He said nothing. Then we got up on stage and they started introducing the band, screaming, "From Hollywood..." and I still didn't know what the first song was going to be. Then his bodyguard ran over and said, "Welcome To The Jungle," "Night Train," "Brown Stone."

Unfortunately, with all the screaming and guitars warming up, I didn't hear him say "Night Train." So I jumped up on my big riser, the lights hit us, and I looked out at a packed Giants Stadium and kicked into "Welcome To The Jungle" and the place lit up. Then I went into "Brown Stone," which started with a Bo Diddley kind of beat on the drums on this huge timpani. Axl looked back at me and gave me the cut sign, crossing his neck, and I said, "No, man. 'Brown Stone.'" He just said, "Stop, stop," and I looked at Slash and said, "Start the song," but Slash wouldn't start it. Axl yelled in the mic' "Stop," and I stopped in the middle of this beat. I was so pissed off that I stuck my drumstick right through the drumhead. Then I looked up and I was on these fifty-foot screens on either side of the stage—all me, with this angry expression on my face. Then Axl said, "We're going to go into another song now." And that's just a little bit of what went on *all* the time. It was complete insanity.

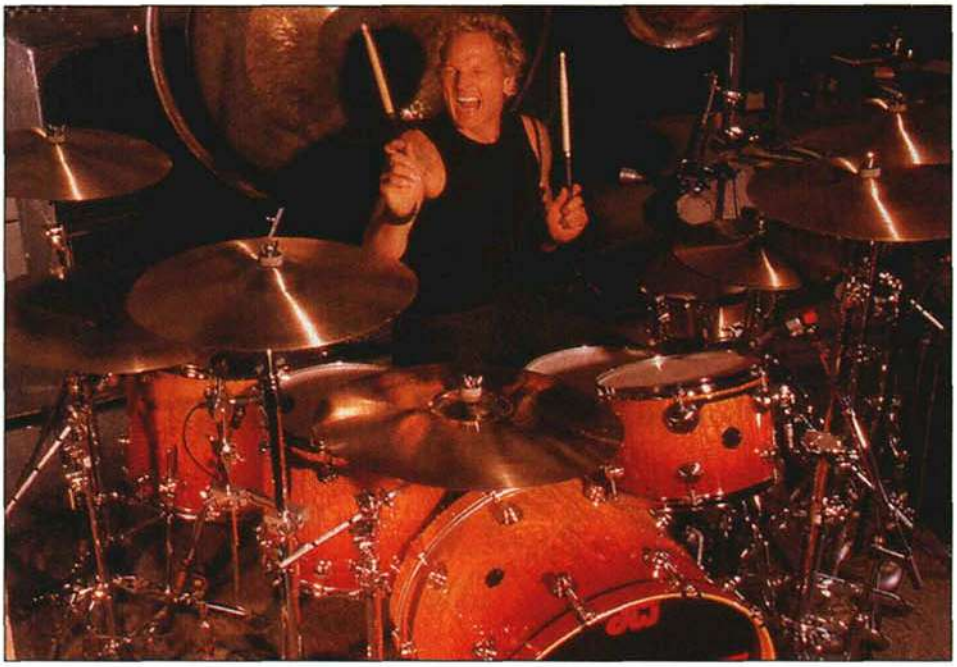
The tour was awesome, though. We did two and a half years, we had our private jet, and we flew home in '93. We landed on our own private air strip in LA, and the limos pulled up. There were thirty-five people in the entourage on the airplane—the bodyguards, an accountant, a masseuse, a chiropractor, two private photographers, and a publicist. We got off the airplane and Axl looked over at me and said, "Hey Matt, I'll see you in a couple of years." So it was like, okay, we're going to take a break. I got into my own private limo, and everyone drove off in their separate directions. After that was when things got kinda bad.

We tried for quite a while to put together a record that *still* hasn't come out. We fired one rhythm guitar player, Axl brought in a friend of his, and I was hanging around rehearsal rooms for years working on material. We had over four hundred hours of jams, riffs, and songs recorded on ADAT.

In the interim I started doing other projects like Slash's Snakepit, and I played on a few other records. I did a Neurotic Outsiders record, which is my band with Steve Jones and John Taylor. G N' R would rehearse from ten at night until six in the morning, and Axl wouldn't even show up until one or two in the morning. And I remember one day sitting there—it was three years later, in 1996—thinking, "I'm making a lot of money, but I'm not being a musician anymore. Somehow I've dug myself into a hole and my life has become more about my lifestyle and the money I'm making and not so much about my drumming."

I had let my drumming go a little. I was living an extreme rock 'n' roll lifestyle, and I wasn't practicing as much. I had bought a huge ranch in Malibu and a condo in town, and I wasn't playing. And when I was, I wasn't enjoying it anymore.

Matt Sorum



So I said to myself, I have to quit this band. I really didn't want to quit, because I always try to see things through to the end. But Axl and I got into it and he ended up firing me.

MD: What were you suggesting?

Matt: At that point, Slash wasn't around, so I said, "We've got to get Slash back and start making this record." Axl said, "We don't need Slash," but I said, "Seems to me all the great songs—'Welcome To The Jungle' and 'Sweet Child Of Mine'—were very much you *and* Slash. We need you two guys together." So he said, "Are you going to quit then?" I said, "No, I'm not going to quit." And then he said, "Well, then you're fired." And about a month later, I got the notice from the lawyers that I was out.

Then my whole life took a turn. I thought, I've got to get back to playing music. I'm going to get my act together. I'm going to get out of these silly, stupid houses I'm living in. So I downsized. I figured, I have to walk away from a huge financial thing to be happy, which was tough. But I wanted to play again and decided I would beat Axl out on the road.

Since I left that band, I produced Poe, who had a top-40 hit. I also produced Candlebox, I did the scores to some films, including *The Last Marshall, Librarian, Sound Man,* and *Fish In A Barrel.* I put together a production company with a partner who is an amazing string instrumentalist. And I have my own studio and an agent who handles me on the film stuff. This is the most fun I've had ever. Every film is different, and it's so much fun to come up with all these different styles of music. Now I've been thinking about the next phase of my life.

MD: It's not easy to make your way out of the rock 'n' roll lifestyle.

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Matt: I had a bit of a bout with drinking too, but I cleaned up my act. I've gotten totally back into focus. I feel like I'm twenty years old again.

MD: How do you stand back and tell yourself you have to change, though?

Matt: I remember one day being in the studio with G N' R, playing my drums and not enjoying it anymore. I asked myself, What's wrong with me? I started producing, and at first I didn't want to play drums on any of those sessions. I hired other drummers.

When I got cleaned up and started playing my drums again, I remember thinking to myself, What is the one thing that has gotten me anything I've ever wanted in life? My drums. That was always the one thing that was sacred to me. Even when I was drinking, I never went on stage drunk. There was one occasion when I played really loaded, and I was really angry at myself. I felt like I had let down my craft and let down my drums. They've always been the one thing that was good to me. I was messing with that, and that's when I knew I needed to make a change.

Hanging around with guys like Gregg Bissonette and other drummers who are really good helped me too. I remember playing Zildjian Day in Mexico City a few years ago along with Gregg and Stephen Perkins. Six thousand people showed up. But that was about the height of my bottoming out. Gregg had flown in from Japan straight to Mexico City. He

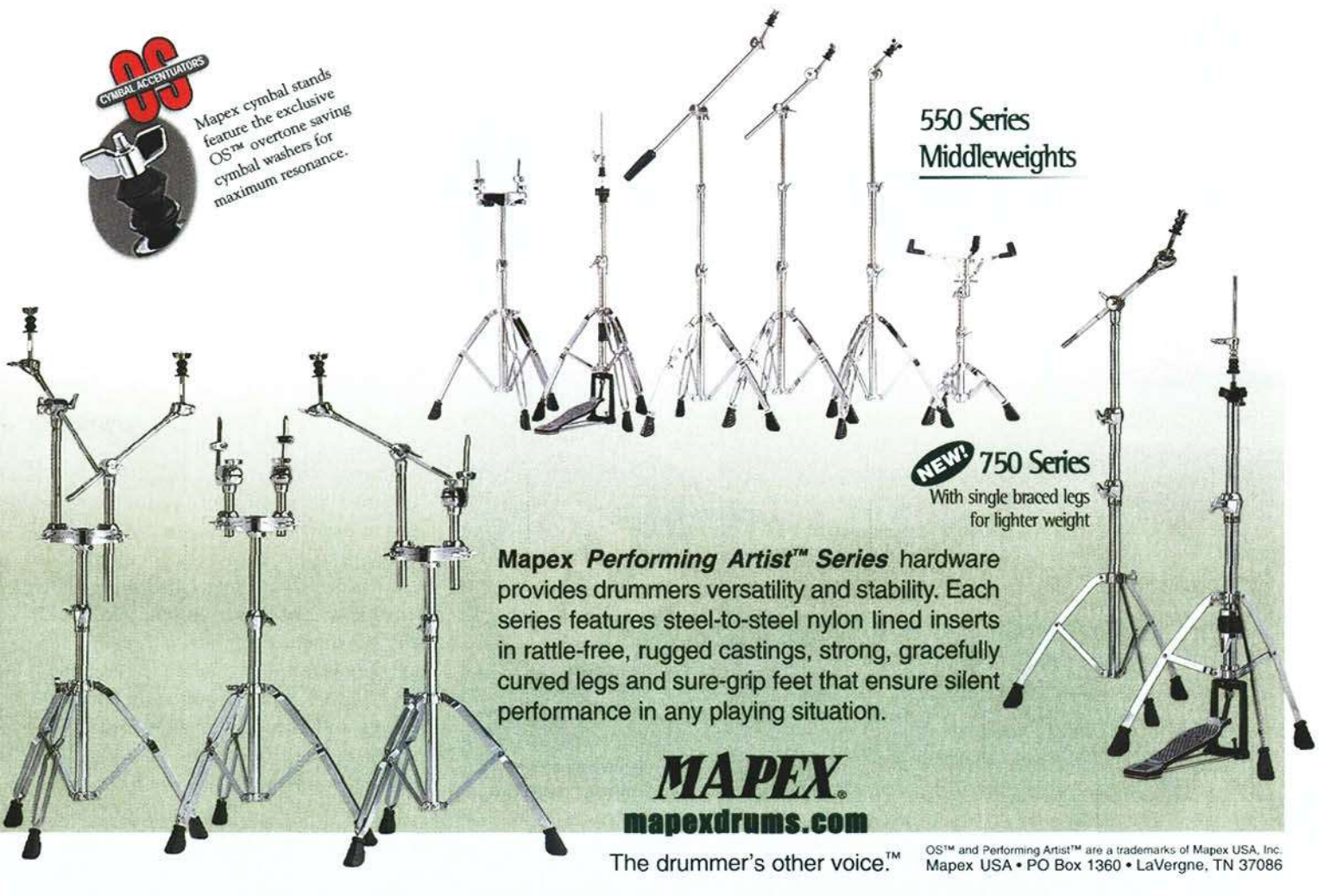
Sorum Sides

These are the albums Matt says best represent his playing.

Artist	Album
The Cult	Beyond Good And Evil
various	Burnin' For Buddy
Guns N' Roses	Use Your Illusion I
Guns N' Roses	Use Your Illusion II
Guns N' Roses	The Spaghetti Incident
Neurotic Outsiders	Neurotic Outsiders
Poe	Hello
Slash's Snakepit	It's Five O'Clock Somewhere
Matt Sorum	Hollywood Zen

And these are the ones he listens to for inspiration.

Artist	Album	Drummer
Gene Krupa	all	Gene Krupa
Led Zeppelin	II	John Bonham
The Who	Who's Next	Keith Moon
Queens Of The Stone Age	R	Nick Lucero
Genesis	Trespass	John Mayhew
Primal Scream	XTRMNTR	various
Soundgarden	all	Matt Cameron



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had just gotten off the plane and was sleeping in the dressing room. I remember my solo: I was tired, and I *sounded* tired. But then Gregg got up there, having barely slept and having flown for twenty hours, and he just slayed! I thought, "He is focused! He is awesome!" He blew me away and really inspired me. And he's always been such a gentleman, just like Louie Bellson. I said to myself, If I'm going to emulate anybody, these are the guys.

I don't want to be one of those arrogant guys running around saying they know everything, because I don't I want to give people an honest representation of where I've been. For another drummer who may be getting into that kind of rock 'n' roll lifestyle, I would say, See for yourself. But for me, I'm glad I came through it and got out of it. In a nutshell, it was a wild, wild ride.

MD: You left The Cult to go with Guns N' Roses, but obviously you didn't burn any bridges with The Cult, as you're back with them now.

Matt: When I left The Cult in '89 to join Guns N' Roses, I was a sideman. At that point, I felt very embraced by the guys in Guns, and I couldn't say no. I went to the Cult guys and they understood.

MD: How did the offer to re-join the band come up?

Matt: About two years ago my band The Neurotic Outsiders was playing periodic shows at The Viper Room, and people would sit in with us. Then I was watching MTV one day and that band Buckcherry had a hit, and it reminded me of The Cult. I wanted to get into a band again and go out on the road. I missed it. So I called Billy [Duffy] in England and said, "I just saw this band Buckcherry, and I'm feeling that it's okay to play rock 'n' roll again. What do you think about talking to Ian [Astbury] and getting back together?" They had been split up for four or five years at that point.

I suggested to Billy that he come out here and stay with me. I had a gig with Neurotic at The Viper Room, and I told Billy he should come down. I called Ian too. We played "Love Removal Machine" and "Wildflower" from their *Electric* album, and the crowd went nuts. We looked at each other and thought, We need to do this again. So the three of us

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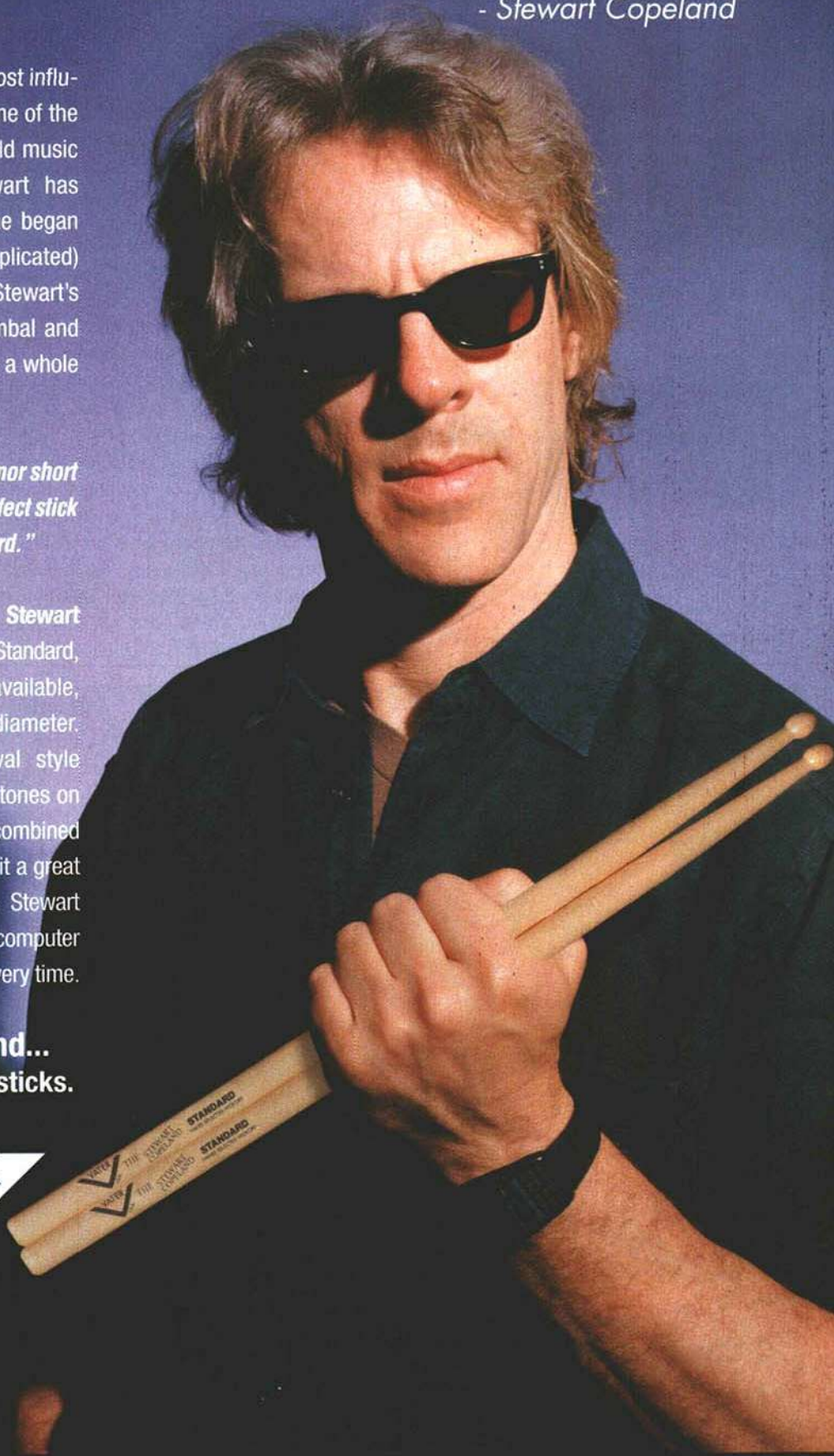
- Stewart Copeland



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Matt Sorum

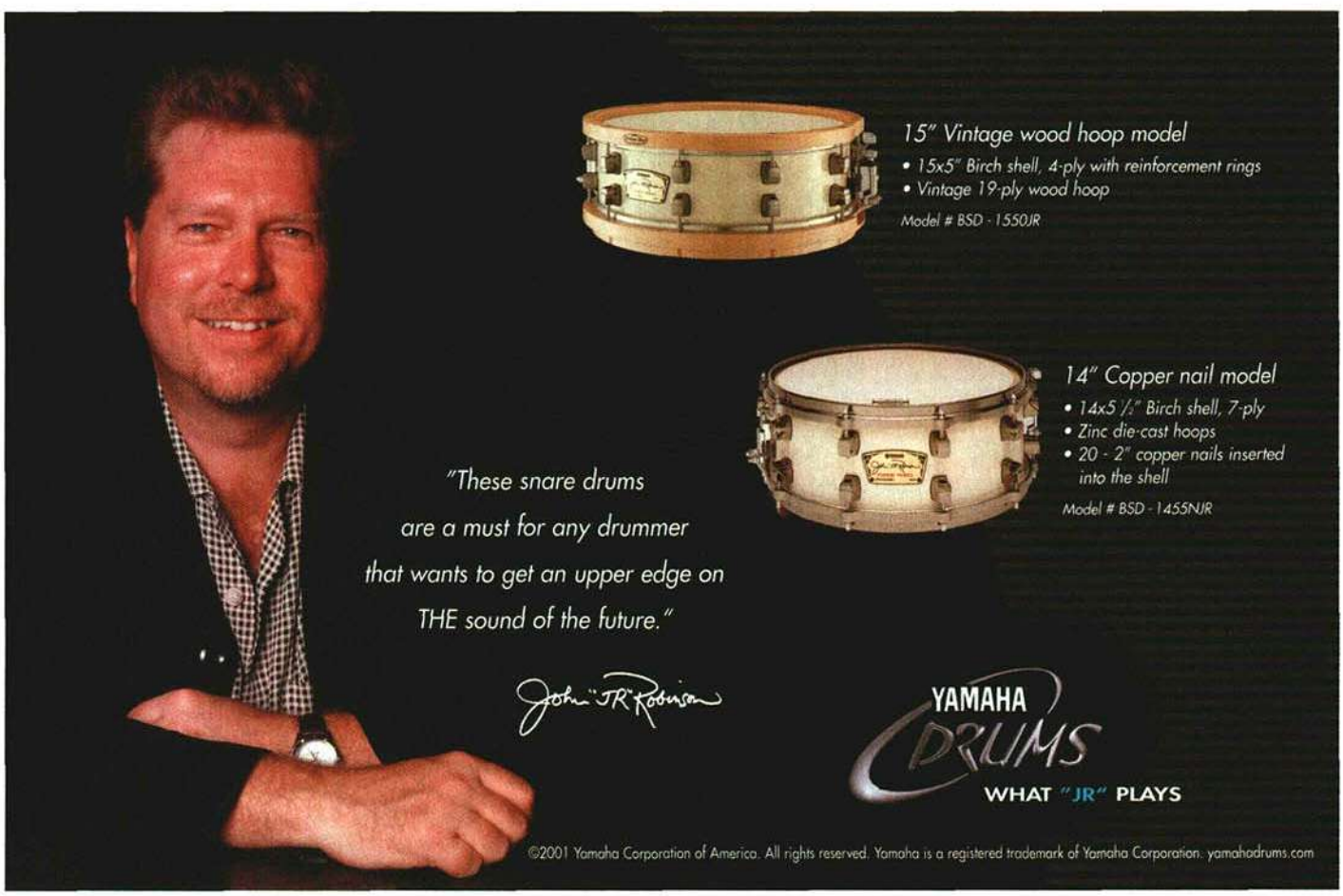
got together and hired a bass player, and we put a tour together without a record. We sold out thirty cities, including seven nights at the House Of Blues in LA. After that, we had every label on the planet after us in a bidding war. We signed with Atlantic and began making a record.

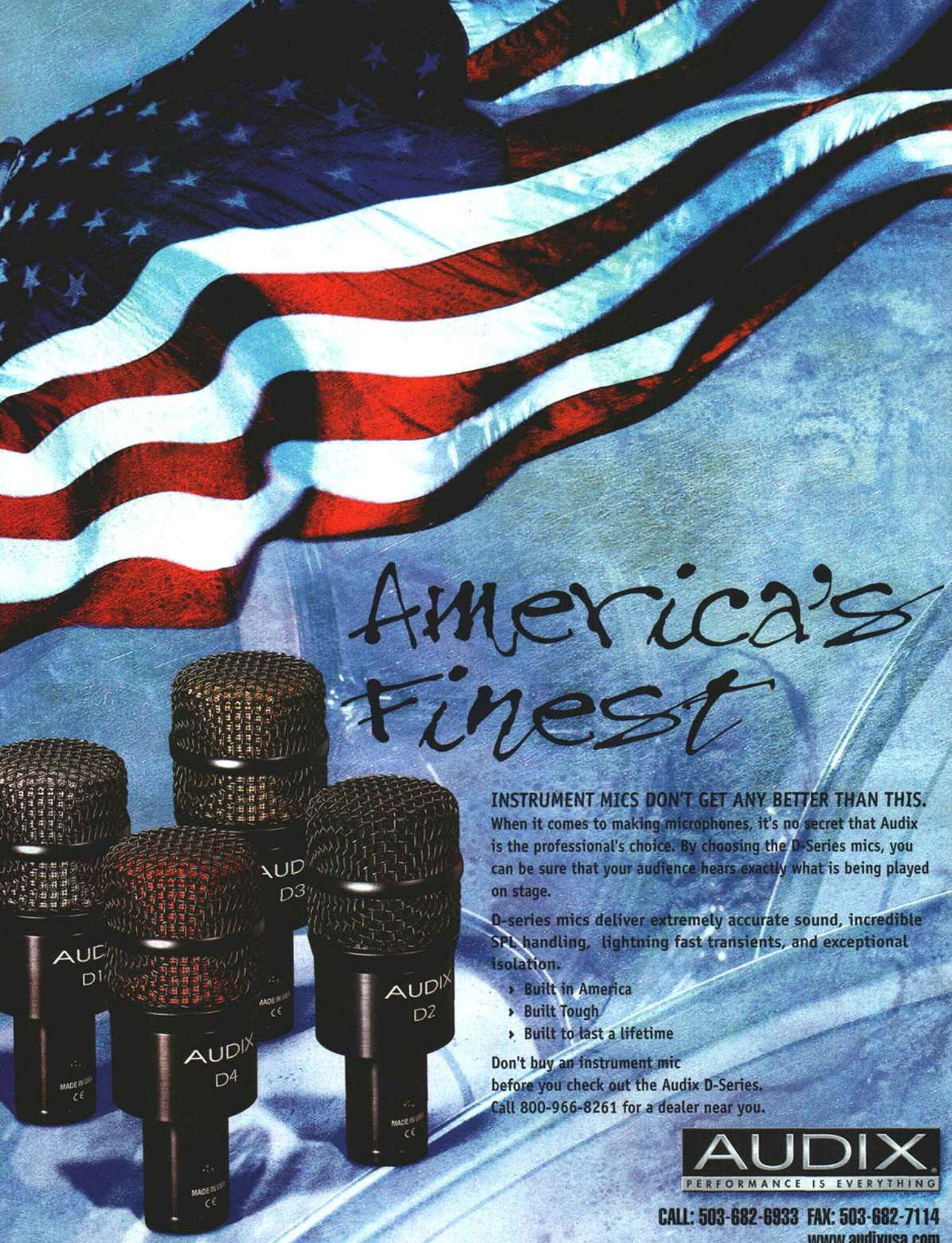
But we ran into some problems with producers. One was Michael Beinhorn. His nickname is "The Drummer Killer." He just has a different idea of what a drummer is supposed to do. We did a song for the Nicholas Cage movie *Gone In 60 Seconds* ["Painted On My Heart"] with him. Half of the song was programmed drums, and I played on the choruses—which is cool, a lot of guys do that now. But I wasn't a real big fan of it, and I sat down with the band and said, What are we doing here? Are we going to play rock 'n' roll, or are we going to make computer music? If that's what we're going to do, I don't want to be part of it. You can keep either Michael Beinhorn or Matt Sorum, take your pick. They said, We'll keep Matt Sorum, good-bye Michael Beinhorn. I said,"Let's get a real rock 'n' roll producer. So I talked to Lars Ulrich about Bob Rock, and we did the record with Bob.

It was the craziest record I've ever made. We went into the studio and started messing around with old ideas. I said, Let's make a record that's a cross between the three best Cult records, with some modern elements. I was playing straighter beats, but it wasn't working. And then Bob came in. He started suggesting that I play more "skippy" beats, some funkier stuff, and I said, Cool. We had no songs, just a lot of riffs. We went into Village Recorders after the two weeks of preproduction with a lot of riffs and ideas. I cut drums in a really small room—A, where they did Steely Dan's *Aja*—but I wasn't sure about it.

MD: What didn't feel right?

Matt: The room was really small and tight-sounding. It didn't sound like rock 'n' roll drums to me. But Bob said, It'll work. We're going to do some things in the mix. I want it to sound trippy and kinda trashy. So I said okay, and I cut those tracks there in ten days. Then we went to Maui, where Bob has a studio in which the drum room overlooks the ocean. Bob had me redo





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some of the choruses, which we mixed onto the original tracks.

Some of the drums on the album have been cut in three different drum rooms. We pieced the album together because we wanted it to be a "process" sort of album. We were watching U2 documentaries and we wanted to experiment to see what we could come up with within that process. We got some jam elements in it, which is trippy. I'm a bit busy in spots, and the drum sound is real tight, too. But bottom line, I think we came up with a great rock 'n' roll album.

MD: Which are your favorite tracks from the album?

Matt: There's a song called "War" with crazy drumming on it. It's almost progressive, it has so many different sections. It makes me think of Jeff Beck's *Blow By Blow*. It starts with that vibe and then kicks into a stomping Rage Against The Machine/Black Sabbath kind of riff. Then it breaks back down to the Jeff Beck thing, and then goes into this heavy chorus, which is like a double-time Motown feel. In fact, I messed around with a lot of R&B things on this record.

There's a song called "Black California" where I'm doing a really skippy kind of beat, but it has a Bonham feel to it. It starts out very mellow. I remember I was listening to Steve Gadd's groove to "50 Ways To Leave Your Lover," and at the beginning of the tune I'm doing some real light press-roll snare stuff. I also played a Zildjian flat ride at the beginning of the song, but when the chorus kicked in, I kicked it hard.

MD: How does the approach change when playing for The Cult vs. Guns N' Roses?

Matt: I gotta tell you, I backed off on some of my big stadium moves. It was hard at first, because when you play with Guns it's such a big thing. A lot of what I did on the drums got very big and grandiose. I pulled back and got rid of a lot of my antics and tightened up my drumming again.

With Guns I was more on top of the beat, more aggressive, and punkier. The Cult has more of a pocket, more groove, especially the older stuff. The newer stuff is more aggressive, but on the older stuff I have to emulate drummers like Mark Brzezicki and Mickey Curry, who played on those early records. I have to take all the different styles from the music The Cult has done and mesh them into a middle ground.

MD: What's it like to play live with The Cult?

Matt: The band's energy is very high. I have to stay fit, but I've been working at it. I'm more fit now than when I played with Guns N' Roses. I work out pretty strenuously, doing lots of cardio with a trainer. I'm actually down to my high school weight! I feel like a prize fighter.

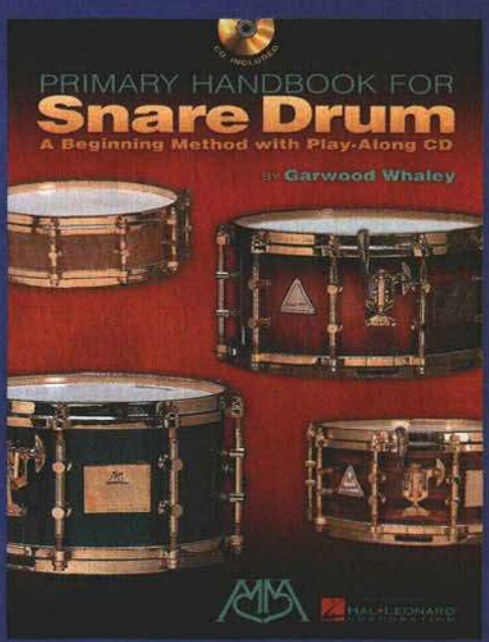
There's nothing worse than having a bunch of old, crusty-looking rock stars on stage. We're much more focused now. We have to be, because there's so much competition. We can't be a bunch of slackers. When I see Aerosmith I think, "They're older guys, but they look great. They're up there and they're competing."

It's exciting to have the challenge of going out and doing it again. Being away from home is also a challenge these days because as you get older, home life starts to mean more to you. You have to try to balance your life. Being in a rock 'n' roll band has different sensibilities. I love it, but I have other aspirations. It's all about the balance.

MD: You've also done a solo album.

Matt: While I was waiting for The Cult record to finish up with guitars and vocals, I wrote a few songs. Then a friend of mine gave my tunes to a label called Conspiracy Records, and they called and asked me to do a record for them. It's called *Hollywood Zen,* and it's coming out shortly. It's about my experiences. There's a song called "3% Solution," which is real jazzy. There's a drum solo at the end over a chord progression. There's a tune called "Sunset Blvd," which is really mellow. I play super light on that one, and I padded up the snare drum with a wallet, like Ringo. I did all the drumming, sang, played guitar, and wrote the songs—kind of a Dave Grohl/Phil Collins approach.

I'm known for being a rock drummer, but I'm trying to diversify. I'm looking for other avenues for my drumming, like the film scores I've done. I'm studying more world music and other aspects of music. I'm constantly listening to a lot of new music. So I'm focused on the new, but with one foot in the old.



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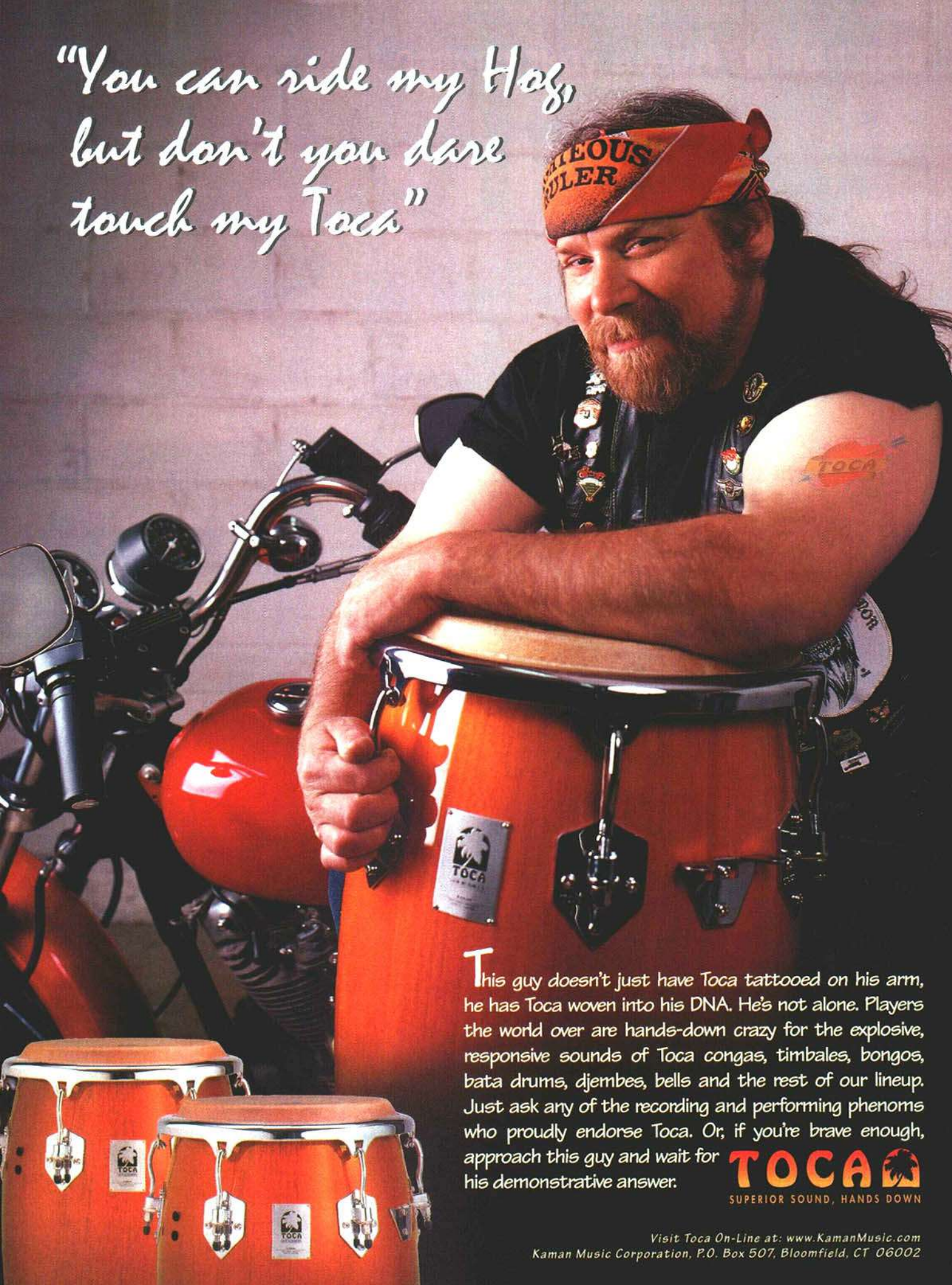

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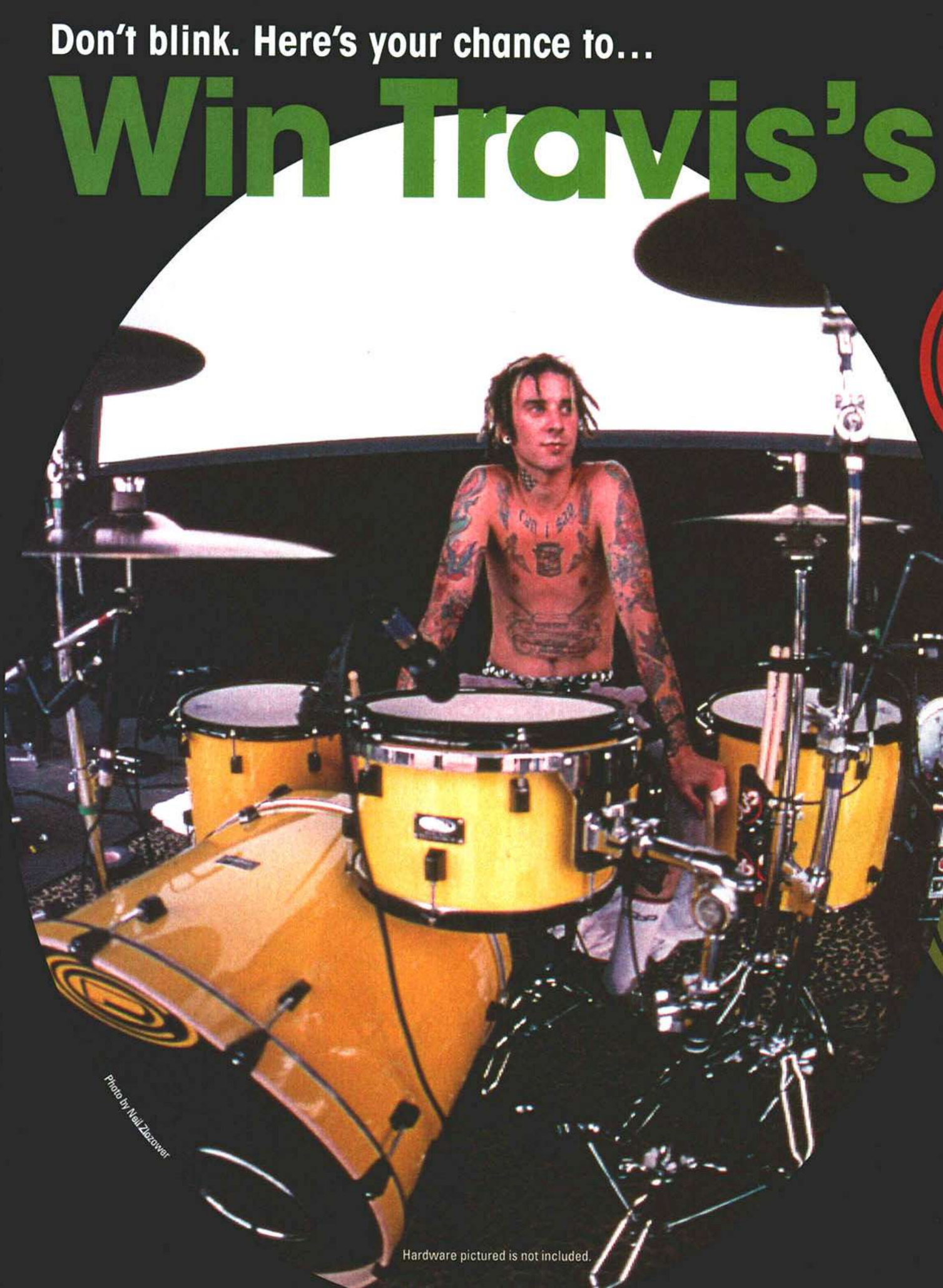

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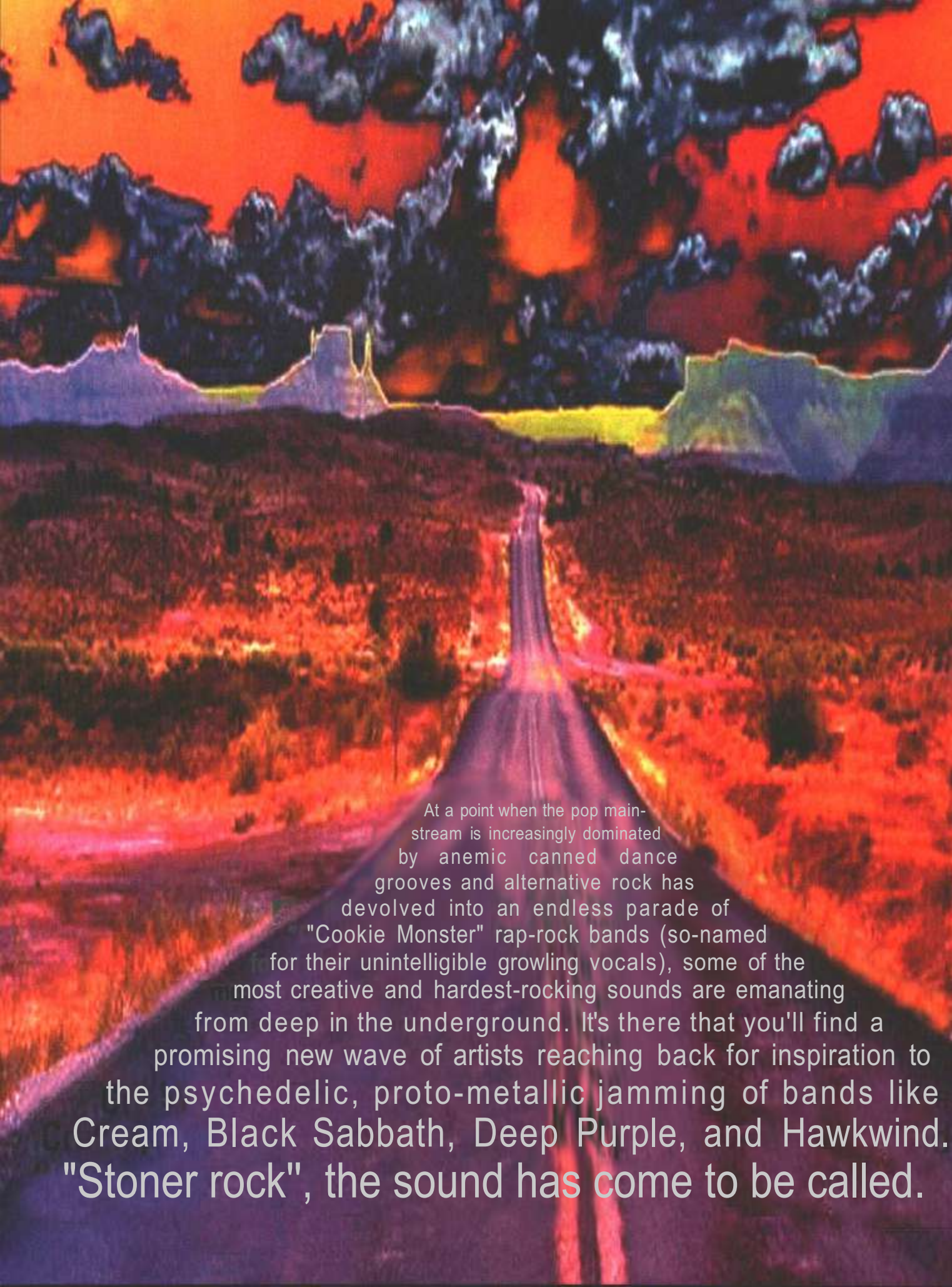

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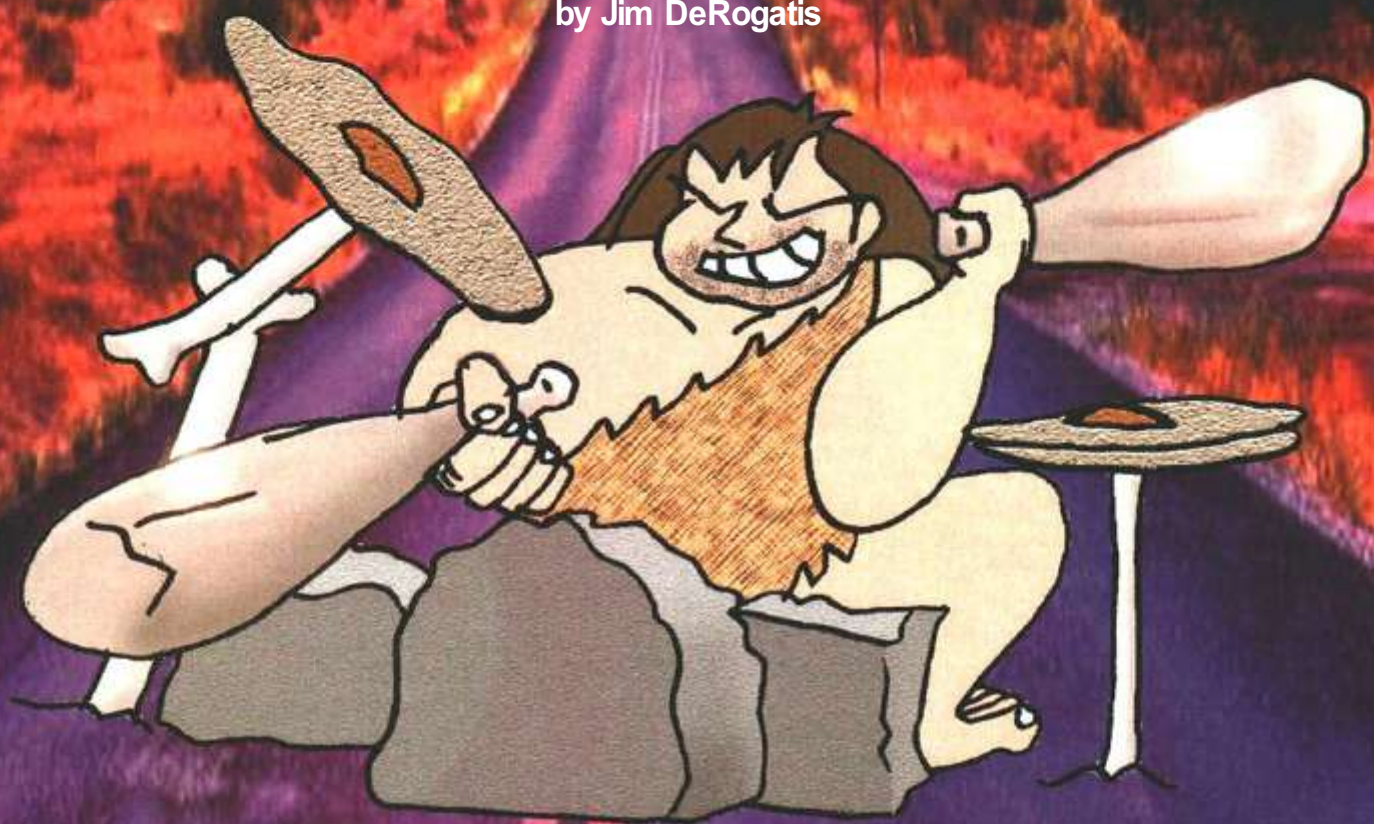
stream is increasingly dominated
by anemic canned dance
grooves and alternative rock has
devolved into an endless parade of
"Cookie Monster" rap-rock bands (so-named
for their unintelligible growling vocals), some of the
most creative and hardest-rocking sounds are emanating
from deep in the underground. It's there that you'll find a
promising new wave of artists reaching back for inspiration to
the psychedelic, proto-metallic jamming of bands like
Cream, Black Sabbath, Deep Purple, and Hawkwind.
"Stoner rock", the sound has come to be called.

The Drummers Of STONER ROCK

by Jim DeRogatis



But stoner rock is a name that nobody is really happy with, resonant as it is of cartoonish caricatures like Spicoli from *Fast Times At Ridgemont High.* In England, the music is often called "doom," but that seems darker than the exuberantly loud genre deserves.

"I really don't care what anybody calls it anymore," says Brant Bjork, the original drummer with Kyuss, now of Fu Manchu. "I've been in this business long enough to know that journalists are gonna call it something. They're not gonna call it rock 'n' roll, because that's what they called it in the '50s. They're not gonna call it heavy metal, 'cause that's what they called it in the '60s and 70s. If it's stoner rock nowadays, fine. It's all rock 'n' roll, so it all makes sense anyway."

Call it what you will, there's a unifying D.I.Y. spirit and a shared love for unrelenting rhythms, space-bound jams, and hard-hitting but melodic riffs among these otherwise diverse bands. Mindful of the way that grunge was co-opted in the early '90s and turned seemingly overnight from music into a marketing gimmick, some of these artists are unwilling to admit that there even is a genre here. And indeed, the specific hallmarks of a "stoner rock sound" are hard to pin down.

"I would say it's straightforward rock 'n' roll—your basic three instruments rocking away with a straightforward beat and no distractions," says Eric Lemasters, founder of The Music Cartel, one of the key independent labels powering this sound. "The term 'stoner rock' is basically just those bands who are playing rock music, but everything is a little more *distorted.* Heavy metal was the first music to put a faster beat with the distortion. Stoner rock has taken all of those elements and slowed them back down, so you've still got the distortion and the same aggression, but not necessarily the speed."

Put simply, stoner rock is about huge gongs, massive Marshals, SVTs, vintage Ludwig Vistalite drumsets, long greasy hair, tattoos, ear-crunching volume, heavy-duty ride cymbals, gigantic hum-along riffs, tongue-in-cheek lyrical references to drug manuals and role-playing fantasy games, Russ Meyer movies, a big underground buzz, fuzztone, fuzztone, and more fuzztone, beer, black lights, and bongs. Stoner rock is almost *never* about drum machines and synthesizers, hair gel, love songs, rapping (freestyle or otherwise), "unplugged" anything, and MTV-level hype.

As you may have gathered, real musicians playing real instruments are a big part of this scene, and the drummers who have been rightly or wrongly saddled with the stoner rock tag are among the most inspired in rock today.

In order to get a handle on the music and the movement, *Modern Drummer* spoke to five musicians who are at various points in their careers and artistic developments: the much-revered Dale Grover of The Melvins, Brant Bjork of Kyuss and Fu Manchu, Jon Kleiman of Monster Magnet, Gene Trautmann of Queens Of The Stone Age, and Ren Squires of sHEAVY.

The Legend: Dale Crover

Over the course of The Melvins' seventeen-year career, the influential trio has been considered post-punk, indie rock, grunge, and now stoner rock. But no one label has ever really fit the lugubrious sonic lava flow that the group so lovingly exudes.

"We've always been oddballs," Crover says, "because we have elements of heavy metal in our stuff, but we've always hated the cheesiness of heavy metal. We're too nerdy for the heavy-metal audience, and we're too heavy for any kind of alternative audience. But there are definitely people who like us and all the weird stuff that we do. It's great that we've managed to exist off this band for so long and not go away—Buzz and I have been doing this as our day jobs now for ten years."

Formed by guitarist-vocalist Buzz Osborne in 1985 in the rural logging town of Aberdeen, Washington, The Melvins were early favorites of the young Kurt Cobain and Krist Novoselic, who talked the group up in interviews once they became successful as members of Nirvana. That led to a deal for The Melvins with Atlantic Records—the band recorded some of its best albums for the label, including the Cobain-produced *Houdini* in 1993 and *Stag* in 1996—but it happily returned to the ranks of the indies in 1997 once the alternative movement had waned.

"One of the reasons I like this band is because it's always a challenge: Throw out any kind of rule book to playing rock drums and do something completely unorthodox."

In 1999, The Melvins recorded a series of three albums for IPECAC—*The Maggot, The Bootlicker,* and *The Crybaby*—showcasing the trio's considerable diversity and justifying its long-running position as underground legends. "My own style definitely developed with the band," Crover says. "If it wasn't for The Melvins, I'd have been playing a different way, or maybe not at all. One of the

reasons I like this band is because it's always a challenge: Throw out any kind of rale book to playing rock drums and do something completely different and unorthodox. We don't have any set rules or guidelines about how we should write songs. We'll do stuff like, 'You'd think I'd want to play this drum beat here, but let's not do the obvious; let's do something completely different.' That always keeps it interesting."

Crover's desire to play the drums was initially fueled as a young teen by the music of KISS and Ted Nugent. "I took lessons for a while, starting on snare drum, but my drum teacher knew that I wanted to play rock," he says. "He was like a jazz drummer, so he went out and got me Carmine Appice's *Realistic Rock* book." Vanilla Fudge veteran Appice and Black Sabbath drummer Bill Ward would become major influences on Dale's playing with The Melvins, which may be best described as a slow-motion train wreck delivered with incredible precision, sans click track.

"It is hard to play slow, but I've never really had to use a click unless it's for something where the drums might not start the song, or if it's with a drum machine," Crover says. "Usually, if it speeds up a little bit, it's no big deal. We're not worried about it being completely in time for the whole song. We're interested in the feel."

Other hallmarks of Crover's playing include heavy use of a Ribbon Crasher; heavy crashing on a massive 24" or 26" ride; heavy pounding with heavy sticks on heavy, oversized drums...heavy heaviness, period. "I got the idea of wearing gardening gloves when I play from Bob Bert of Pussy Galore and Sonic Youth," he says. "I'd been using these drummer gloves that cost like twenty-five bucks a pop and are made of leather dyed black and that bleed all over your hands. But these gardening gloves are totally cheap and I just go to the hardware store and buy a giant box to use for the whole tour."

In addition to The Melvins, Crover sings and plays guitar with a stoner rock side project called Altamont. He's also been branching out into session work, and he performed on several tracks on the debut album by rising country star Hank Williams III. "It was sort of a typical Nashville situation, and the producer was like, 'Wow, you play drum fills! I can't get these other studio drummers to play drum fills,'" Crover says. Unfortunately, he's still waiting for a call-back.

Proudest recorded moments: "Sometimes I think some of the simple stuff is really good. There's a song on this record we did called *The Bootlicker* called 'Let It All Be,' and I really like the drum beat to that song: It's really simple and kind of minimal. Actually, Buzz wrote that on the drum machine and I just took it and made it a little bit different and a little more groovy. I guess any of the slow stuff would also be a good example of a signature sound or whatever, but I think that we can do so many different things and have no limitations that I don't know if I could pinpoint a single song. If you want to check out a bunch of different styles that I can do, listen to *Stag*. That would probably be the one album that I would pick."

Crover's kit: "I've been playing Tama drums for a while. I have an endorsement, and they made me a drumset five or six years ago with a 26" kick, a 16" rack, a 24" floor tom, and a 20" gong bass drum. I have a couple of different snare drums—brass and wood—and they're all Artstar Custom. I also use an old 1948 Gretsch kit that's smaller—24", 13", and 16". I use that a lot for recording because it sounds great. With those 3-ply shells, you hit the rack and the floor at the same time and it sounds like a chord. But if I play that too long and then go back to the big set, it's like driving a tank!

"I've gotten some stuff from Paiste. I break a lot of cymbals—a couple per tour—and I don't use crashes per se; *everything's* a crash. I also have a gong, and I try to use it as much as possible—at least enough to make it worth taking on the road. I'm on my third gong now; I break those, too. The day after Kurt Cobain died, we had just come back from Europe and we were in Portland, Maine, and to make myself feel better I went out and bought a gong. That one's really beat now, but I finally bought a brand-new one, a 32" Paiste."

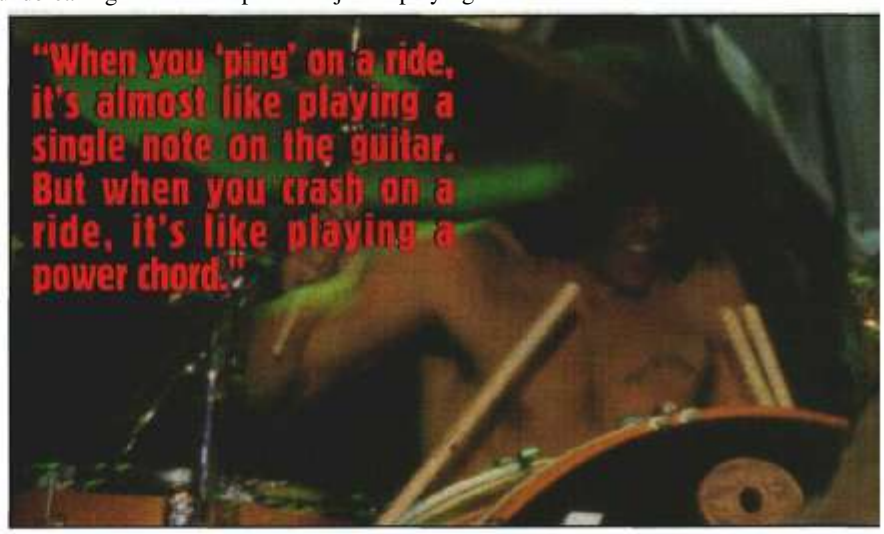
The Major Influence: Brant Bjork

After Sabbath's Bill Ward and The Melvins' Dale Crover, Brant Bjork is the name most often cited as an influence by other drummers in the burgeoning genre, based primarily on his groundbreaking playing on the first few recordings by Kyuss: *Wretch, Blues For The Red Sun,* and *Welcome To Sky Valley.*

Named for "the sons of Kyuss," monsters in the *Dungeons & Dragons* role-playing game, Kyuss first came together around guitarist Josh Homme and vocalist John Garcia in the small southern California town of Palm Desert in the late '80s. The bandmembers moved to Los Angeles in 1990 and signed to Chameleon Records after thirteen performances in the big city. All of their dreams seemed to be coming true, but after two years of non-stop touring, Bjork abruptly quit and ceded the drum throne to his friend and fellow desert rat, Alfredo Hernandez.

"I just burned out," Bjork says. "I was drinking too much and smoking too much—I was an eighteen-year-old kid who was playing in this crazy rock band and I had no idea of what I was doing. I was just lucky that I was smart enough to realize that I had to stop before it killed me."

The aspect of Bjork's playing that other drummers love most is



the huge wash of a massive ride cymbal that hovers over a heavy riff like an ominous storm cloud. "It probably comes from growing up in the garage," he says. "It was loud, and I was never very good technically—I taught myself how to play. I didn't know what the difference was between a ride and a crash. When I was playing punk rock and heavy rock as a kid with loud guitars, there were a lot of times when I didn't want to hear that little ping-y ride cymbal sound. When you "ping" on a ride, it's almost like playing a single note on the guitar. But when you *crash* on a ride, it's like playing a power chord. So I just kind of filled up some space."

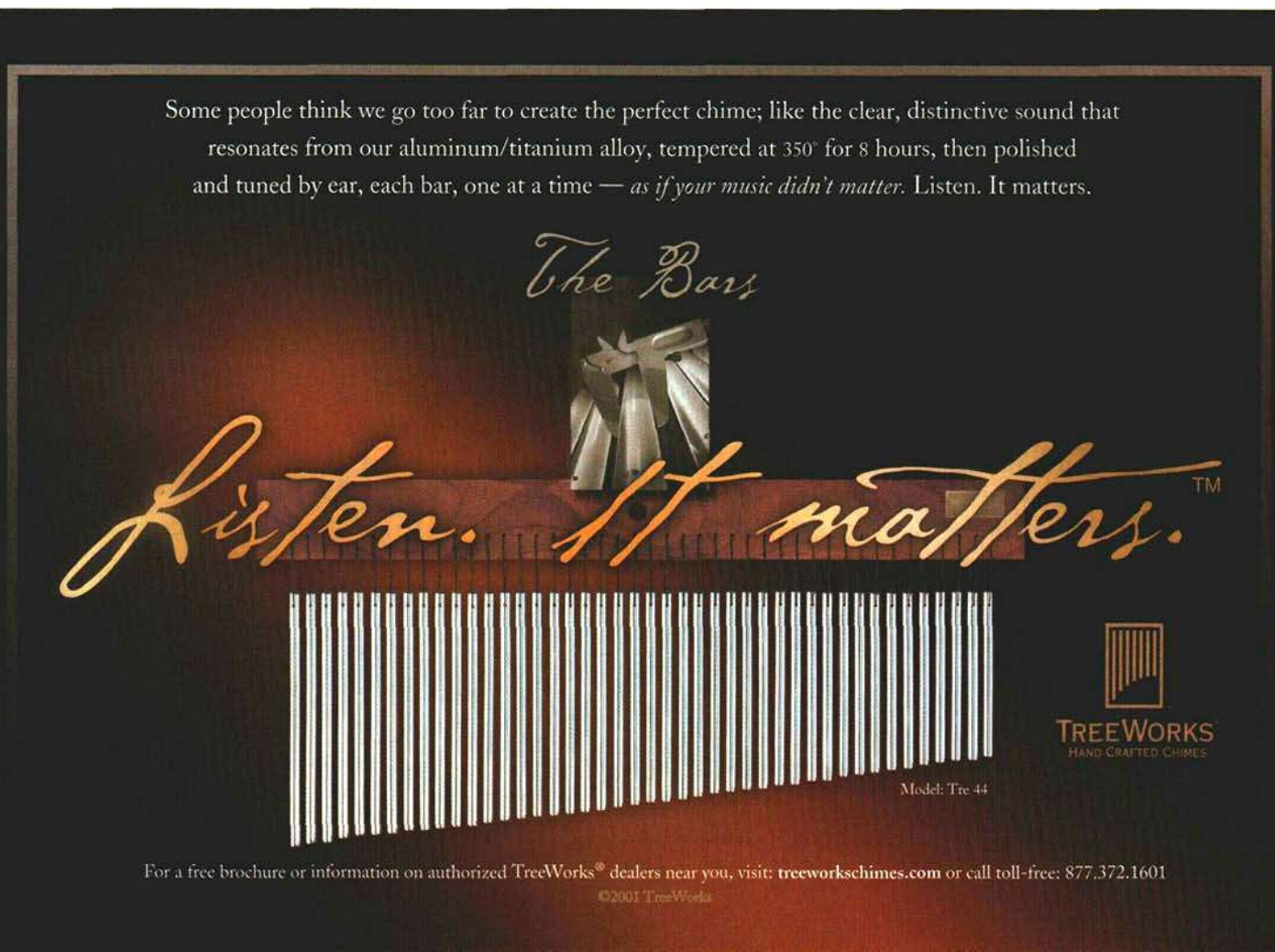
Bjork has always filled a bigger role than just playing drums. He also plays guitar and bass, and he wrote some of Kyuss's most memorable songs, including the anthemic "Green Machine." He joined Fu Manchu on drums in time for 1997's *Action Is Go,* having already produced the band's first album, 1994's *No One Rides For Free.* He also contributes lyrics to the band. Bjork even recorded a psychedelic and soulful solo album, *Jalamanta,* credited to Brant Bjork And The Operators and released on Man's Ruin in 1999.

"I've never said, 'I wanna be the drummer.' I just loved music and I wanted to make records," Bjork says. "As a kid, I was almost listening as a producer, before I even knew what that word meant. Punk rock allowed a kid like me with low self-confidence to get involved in music and start performing. I chose drums simply because they looked like the most exciting instrument. But I was equally compelled to play guitar and bass and create music' as a whole. It was sort of a challenge, because I was caught in this stereotypical role of being the drummer—the guy with the backbeat who sits in the back and holds the rhythm—but I also wanted to take on some responsibilities as far as doing album art and writing songs. I had things I wanted to express."

As for how his drumming has developed, Bjork is self-deprecating to a fault. "I was never a studious drummer; I was interested in playing great songs," he says. "Let's face it: It begins and ends with songs. If you don't write great songs, big deal. In Kyuss, I never even thought like, 'I'm the beat guy and I'm gonna lock in with the bassist to play a tight rhythm.' I was like, 'I'm gonna lock in with Josh and watch the way he strums and the way we move from chord to chord, and I'm just gonna roll with him.' It was just kind of a natural thing."

Proudest recorded moments: "There's a song on *Welcome To Sky Valley* (Elektra Records) called 'Demon Cleaner'; it was a first take, and there was a roll that was kind of my version of Ginger Baker. It probably sounds nothing like Ginger Baker, but that's kind of where my head was at at the time—this rhythmic roll thing on the toms. And I really liked the drumming on the first track of the last Fu Manchu record *[King Of The Road,* Mammoth Records], 'Hell On Wheels.' I thought that was a good one; it just had a lot of energy and it kind of flowed nicely. I always like to hear flow."

Bjork's gear: "I don't really have any endorsements; I'm not real good in that department. I've played Ludwig drums my whole life. Ironically, just today I received a new kit that I'm gonna try out for the new Fu Manchu record, and if I like it, I'll tour with it. It's a clear Fibes kit. I bought some Ludwig Vistalites a few years ago, and I used them on the Brant Bjork And The Operators record. They're beautiful, and I love the Vistalite sound. But my Ludwigs are from '75, and I didn't want to take them on the road."



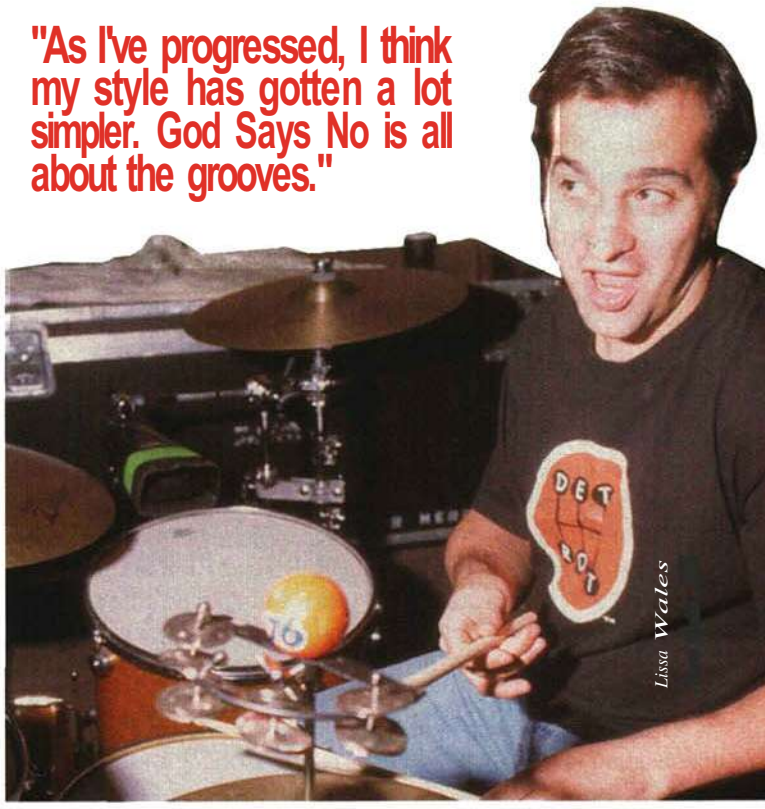
The Journeyman: Jon Kleiman

As longtime drummer for Red Bank, New Jersey's Monster Magnet, Jon Kleiman is all about devoting himself to the song and playing exactly what's right for bandleader Dave Wyndorf's hard-hitting but ultra-melodic tunes.

"I'm self-taught, with no formal education—I never learned how to do a paradiddle or whatever—and my left hand is basically like having a dead herring strapped to my shoulder," Kleiman says, laughing. "I'm not as good, of course, but I consider myself to be in the Ringo school of things, where your style is your main selling point. In the beginning, I knew that I wasn't great, and I couldn't do the things that I heard. I was listening to a lot of Mitch Mitchell at that point, and I was like, 'Damn! I can't do any of this, so I'm just gonna make up for it by doing a fill every *other* measure!'"

Kleiman started playing the drums as a teenager in punk bands gigging around South Jersey. He joined Monster Magnet after its first single and has played with the group ever since, progressing with it from the Hawkwind-inspired psychedelic sludge of early albums like *Spine Of God* and *Dopes To Infinity,* through the more tuneful and focused efforts of *Powertrip* (a gold-selling hit for A&M Records) and the new album, *God Says No.* The latter is a veritable tour of different stoner rock styles, from the straightforward stomp of "Melt" to the organ-driven garage-band rave-up of "Heads Explode," and from the twisted Robert Johnson-on-mushrooms blues of "Gravity Well" to the Middle Eastern drone of "Cry."

"As I've progressed, I think my style has gotten a lot simpler. God Says No is all about the grooves."



Lissa Wales

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Stoner Rock

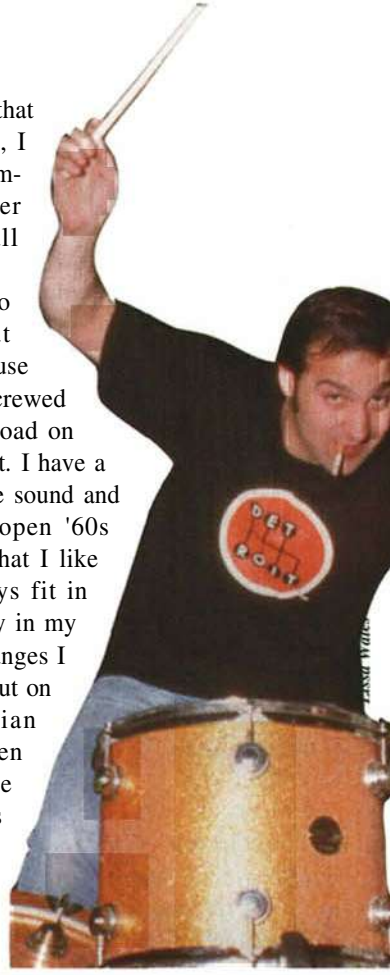
"I was never too into the stoner rock thing," Kleiman says. "I just thought it was an excuse to rip off Black Sabbath and not be able to write songs. It's fun to jam on stuff sometimes, and certainly we've done it—the song 'Tab' was like thirty minutes long—but I didn't ever really consider us stoner rock. We're more creative than that. Dave tends to arrange songs in pretty odd ways. It isn't like, 'This song is really easy; it's verse/chorus/verse/chorus/bridge/verse/chorus/out.' It's like, 'This song starts on a bridge, then there's a pre-chorus, then there's a verse into a bridge.' That's the only major obstacle for me; I just have to make really detailed notes if I don't know the song absolutely by heart."

Unlike many stoner rock bands, which emphasize the importance of group dynamics in the studio, Monster Magnet does all of its jamming in intense rehearsals long before entering the studio. When it came time to record *God Says No,* Kleiman played alone. "I think I played better that way," he says. "There were no distractions, and by then I knew how the songs went in my head so well that I could hear other people's parts."

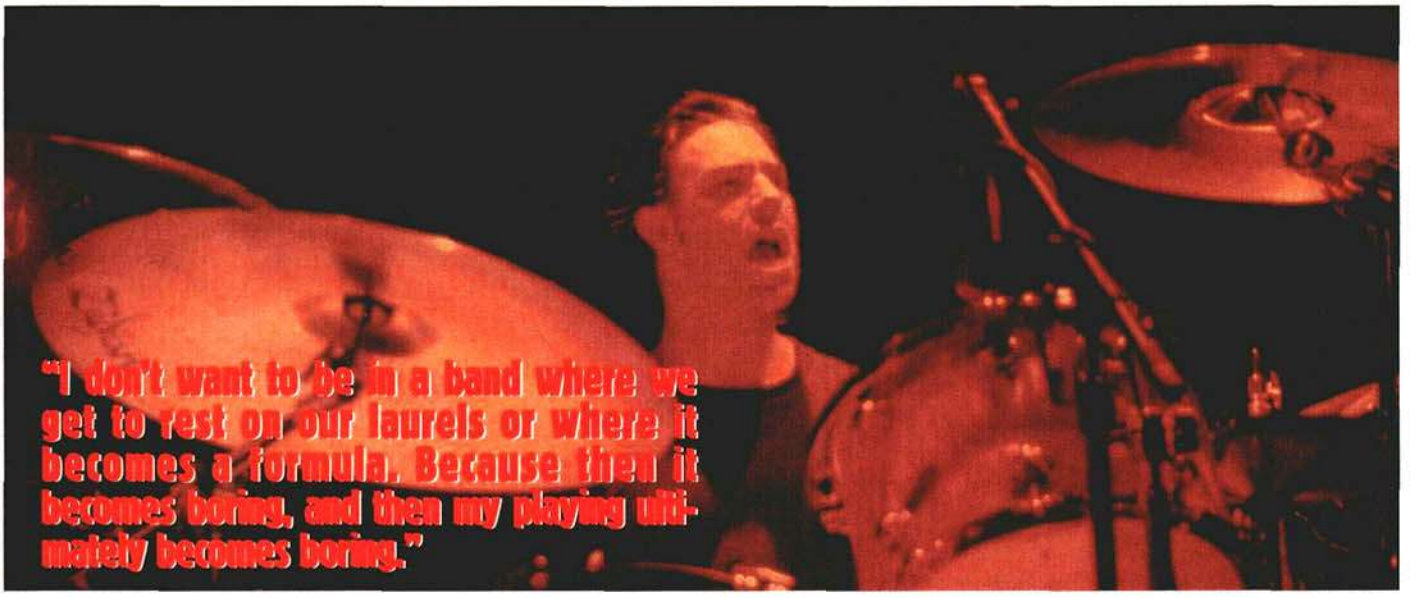
Like many of his stoner rock peers, Kleiman also has a side project, rockabilly/garage band The Ribeye Brothers. Original Monster Magnet vocalist Tim Cronin sings and plays banjo, while Kleiman does everything else; he says the group serves as a healthy outlet for all of the things he can't do in Monster Magnet.

Proudest recorded moments: "I think I overplayed a lot in the beginning, especially on *Superjudge. Spine Of God* was more psych, so I didn't have to do that so much. As I've progressed, I think my style has gotten simpler as I've become a better player. *God Says No* is all about the grooves."

Monster drums: "I used to have two Vistalite sets, but they sounded like crap because the bearing edges were all screwed up. Now I play out on the road on this really nice Slingerland set. I have a deal with them, and I love the sound and the look. I love that wide-open '60s sound, but the drum sound that I like unfortunately doesn't always fit in Monster Magnet. When I play in my home studio, there's some changes I have to make to them to go out on the road. I'm using Aquarian heads now, and they've been really accommodating. I'll use their American Vintage heads in the studio, and they're really great for that '60s sound."

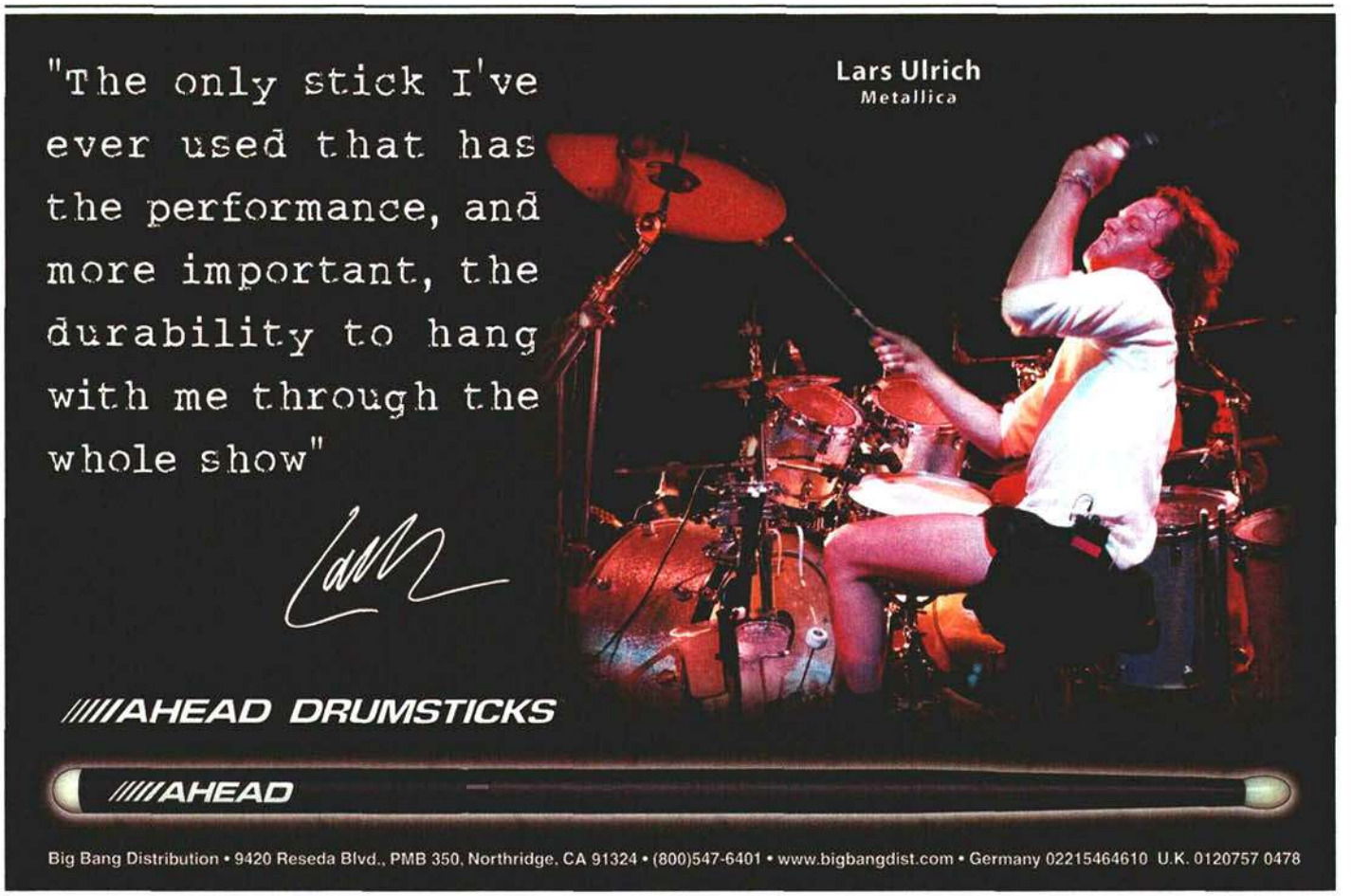


Up-And-Comer Number 1: Gene Trautmann



After Brant Bjork left Kyuss, Gene Trautmann got the call from bandleader Josh Homme to come to the desert for an audition. He played with the group for two weeks, but the gig eventually went to Alfredo Hernandez, and Trautmann was heartbroken. Homme didn't forget him, though; he called Trautmann again to play on half of 2000's *Rated R* (Interscope), the second album by his new band, Queens Of The Stone Age. Trautmann is now a member of the touring group as well.

Trautman was born and raised in Portland, Oregon, and started playing along to records when he was eleven. "The KISS Halloween special was sort of like that moment of clarity that told me I wanted to be involved and had to do this for a living," he says. The fledgling drummer began playing in punk bands in high school and eventually joined a group called The Miracle Workers, who were dedi-



cated to reviving the first-generation punk of mid-'60s garage bands like The Standells and The Count Five. Gene followed the band to Los Angeles and played with it on several albums, in addition to touring the US and Europe.

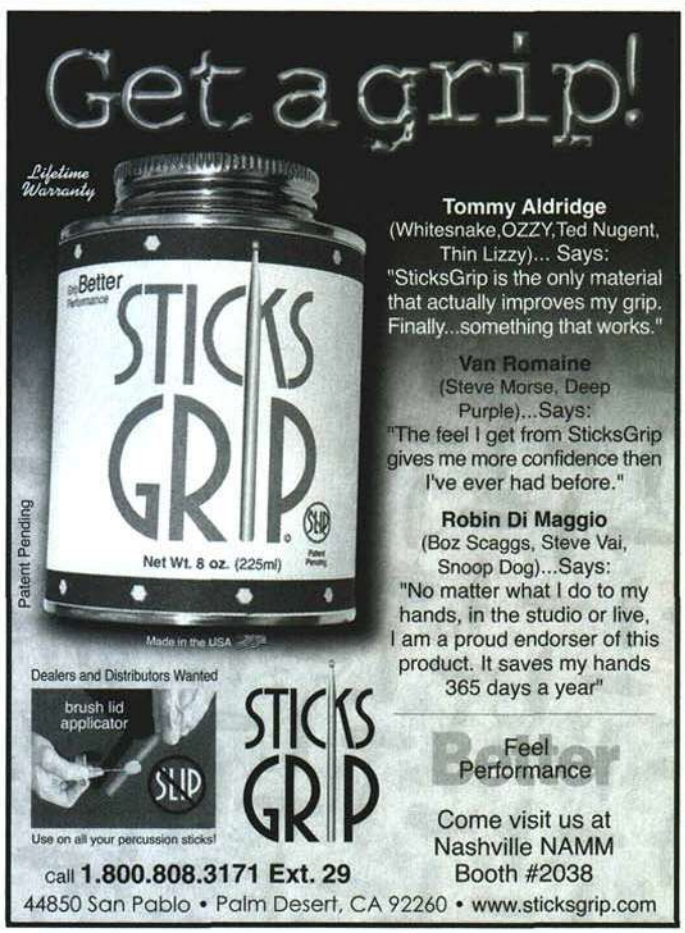
Though he has always had wide-ranging tastes as a listener, Trautmann is particularly inspired as a musician by some of his stoner rock forebears. "To be honest, I listen to a lot of what Brant Bjork has done and also to what Alfredo Hernandez has done," he says. "Part of that is due to the fact that they worked with Josh, and what they did was really great. The main thing that I listen to in what Brant Bjork does, and what I aspire to, is his right hand and the 16th notes on the ride cymbal—filling up the empty spaces with a shimmering cymbal sound. Conversely, stylistically, I really love the English rock drummers from the '70s, like John Bonham and Mitch Mitchell. They were like jazz-trained guys playing in a rock medium with a lot more finesse in their chops and the ability to do more subtle things. I guess that's where my own path is divergent from the straight-ahead thing.

"To me, drumming is about complementing the song, and different drummers approach jams or open-ended songs in different ways," Trautmann adds. "I think ultimately with rock music, the style that's demanded is the ability to be solid and simple, so I think the challenge in longer jam-like songs is to not overplay and to keep things interesting. You can't give it away all at once. When I hear some recordings, I bum out when the drummer is just all over the place all the time, trying to fill in the spaces without respect to the song structure."

Queens are more melodic, more psychedelic, and more drone-oriented than Kyuss, and Homme drives his musicians hard to hit the limits of their creativity. "I like that," Trautmann says. "I don't want to be in a band where we get to rest on our laurels or where it becomes a formula. Because then it becomes boring, and my *playing* ultimately becomes boring. Basically, this is the best gig I've ever had. I love what I do with them, we travel extensively, and we tend to have a pretty grueling tour schedule—we play almost every day. It's what I've always strived to do. And being involved in the recording process with them is better than anything I've done in the past."

Proudest recorded moments: "I like 'Feel Good Hit Of The Summer' because I feel like I had a lot to do with the way the song ended up sounding. It's all based on the beat, a very drum-driven thing. Josh just gave me the song and said, 'What would you do with this?' I did that pounding rhythm and he said, 'Wow, that's perfect!' I also like 'Monster In The Parasol.' I didn't do it to a click track, but it's really tight and disco-y, and I like that. There's a song that's not actually on the record, a European B-side called 'Ode To Clarissa,' and that's really awesome; it's got a great Bow-Wow-Wow/Bo Diddley tom-tom thing in the middle of it. It's really punk rock and very much like me."

Stone Age drums: "I've got a vintage '69 Camco set: 14x26 kick, 10x14 rack, and 16x18 and 18x20 floor toms, and I've got a 1940s WFL 6x14 snare drum. I play Zildjian cymbals—I have an endorsement with them—and I've got a 24" ride, 19" and 20" crashes, and a 20" ride that I use as a crash. They're all As. I also have a set of bongos, a cowbell, and a tambourine, and that's basically the setup."



Up-And-Comer Number 2: Ren Squires

The English branch of the stoner rock movement tends to be darker than the American; not for nothing do they call the music "doom" on the other side of the Atlantic. Sitting somewhere in the middle—geographically and sonically—is sHEAVY (pronounced "Chevy," like the car), a band that first came together in St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada in 1993. "We were called Green Machine in the beginning because we couldn't think of a name and because we played 'Green Machine' by Kyuss," Ren Squires says. Not surprisingly, Brant Bjork's playing was a major influence on sHEAVY's drummer, along with punk-rock groups like The Misfits and classic stoner rock influences like Black Sabbath. In fact, singer Steve Hennessey's vocal resemblance to Ozzy Osbourne has garnered countless Sabbath comparisons, even though the pummeling but melodic sound of songs like "Quincy The Pig Boy" and "Alcofuel" embraces other influences as diverse as The Melvins, Deep Purple, and mid-'70s Pink Floyd.

Ren Squires (third from left) and sHEAVY.

Another self-taught musician, Squires graduated from playing along with records on a rubber practice-pad kit in his bedroom to drumming for punk-rock garage bands. "I was in four or five punk-rock bands before I discovered what I wanted to play," he says. "I started off fast and realized that playing slow was a lot more fun. Then I started getting into music that was slowed down, psychedelic stuff from the '70s.

"When I'm playing in sHEAVY, I like to picture myself as the guy in Deep Purple, Ian Paice," Squires admits. "He's just so smooth, and he's doing really complicated stuff, which I can't even touch. It's amazingly smooth, and when he's solid, he's *so*

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solid. Especially on our last record, that's what I really tried to do. Other than that, I don't really think about playing drums, I just kind of do it. I don't have any real training, and I don't know any technical terms. Playing drums for me just kind of happens. I've got no interest in doing it unless there's other music going on."

In addition to drumming for sHEAVY, Squires manages the band and runs an Internet-only stoner rock record store, Dallas Tarr, which can be found through the band's Web site, www.sheavy.com. Because of the distance and the expense, sHEAVY has yet to do a major tour of the US, and things are further complicated for the group by the fact that Hennessy has relocated to Texas for his day job. Still, the band continues to come together for recordings like the recent *Celestial Hi-Fi* (The Music Cartel), and its albums are favorites with stoner rock aficionados.

"I was in four or five punk-rock bands before I discovered what I wanted to play. I started off fast and realized that playing slow was a lot more fun."

Squires has fewer problems being linked to the genre than some of his fellow musicians, though he is dismayed by some bands' lack of creativity. "I'll always think, 'Man, if they're lumping us into a category with like twenty other bands that I like equally as much as my own band, that's just dandy,'" he says. "On the other hand, I hate to think of things in terms of 'scenes,' and it is kind of getting redundant. There are a lot of good bands that are still doing what they always did—which is changing over time—and then there are all these other young bands that are popping up doing what was already done five or six years ago: big fuzz and a little psychedelic breakdown middle part and then back into something heavy with a scream. And that's just terrible."

Proudest recorded moments: "I think it's 'Strange Gods, Strange Altars' or 'Solarsphere' from *Celestial Hi-Fi;* I forget which. It starts off with a drum roll. Those two songs, when we recorded them, appeared on the album the same way we recorded them, one immediately after the other, so I get them confused. My next one would probably be 'Tales From The Afterburner,' just because it's slow and I actually kept in time. I can't see how Dale Grover does it—that guy, he hits weird chimes and stuff instead of keeping a beat, and it sounds like he's playing with two-by-fours!"

Heavy set: "The drums themselves are a Canadian kit called Canwood made in British Columbia. I got them used; all my kit is low-budget stuff that I stumbled across. The cymbals are a mishmash of everything; I've got a big Paiste ride that I've been using for years and years, and some Sabian Fusion hats, and whatever crash I can find at the time. They're small; the kick drum is 20", but it's long, so it's like a little cannon. But otherwise, no fancy stuff here; I'm a low-budget drummer. In fact, when my friend heard that I was going to be in *Modern Drummer,* he was like, 'But you don't even have good drums! *I'm* the one with all the fancy gear!'"

Stoner Research

The key independent labels in stoner rock all have sites on the Web: England's Rise Above is at www.riseaboverecords.com, The Music Cartel is www.music-cartel.com, and Man's Ruin is at www.mansruin.com. The Web is also home to several fine fanzines, including Roadburn (wwwjcs4all.nl/~roadburn/frames.html) and Stoner Rock Rules (www.freeweb.org/freeweb/StonerRockRules/), as well as a spirited newsgroup, www.egroups.com/community/stonerrock.

Other albums that are well worth investigating include Orange Goblin's *Time Traveling Blues* (The Music Cartel), Nebula's *To The Center* (Sub Pop); Scissorfighfs *Wonderdrug-Up The Dosage* (Wonderdrug), Cathedral's *Soul Sacrifice/Statik Majik* (Earache), The Men Of Porn's *Pom American Style* (Man's Ruin), Acid King's *Busse Woods* (Man's Ruin), Terra Firma's *Terra Firma* (The Music Cartel), Atomic Bitchwax's *The Atomic Bitchwax* (Tee Pee/MIA), and Electric Wizard's *Dopethrone* (The Music Cartel).

The roots and inspirations of these sounds—as well as some of the best drumming in the history of hard-rock—can be heard on albums like Black Sabbath's *Master Of Reality* (Warner Bros.), Hawkwind's *25 Years On 1973-1977* box set (Griffin Music), Blue Cheer's *Vincebus Eruptum* (Mercury), Deep Purple's *Machinehead* (Warner Bros.), and Blue Oyster Cult's *Workshop Of The Telescopes* best-of compilation (Sony).

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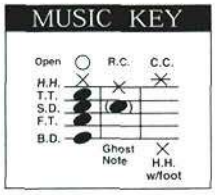
Train's

Scott Underwood

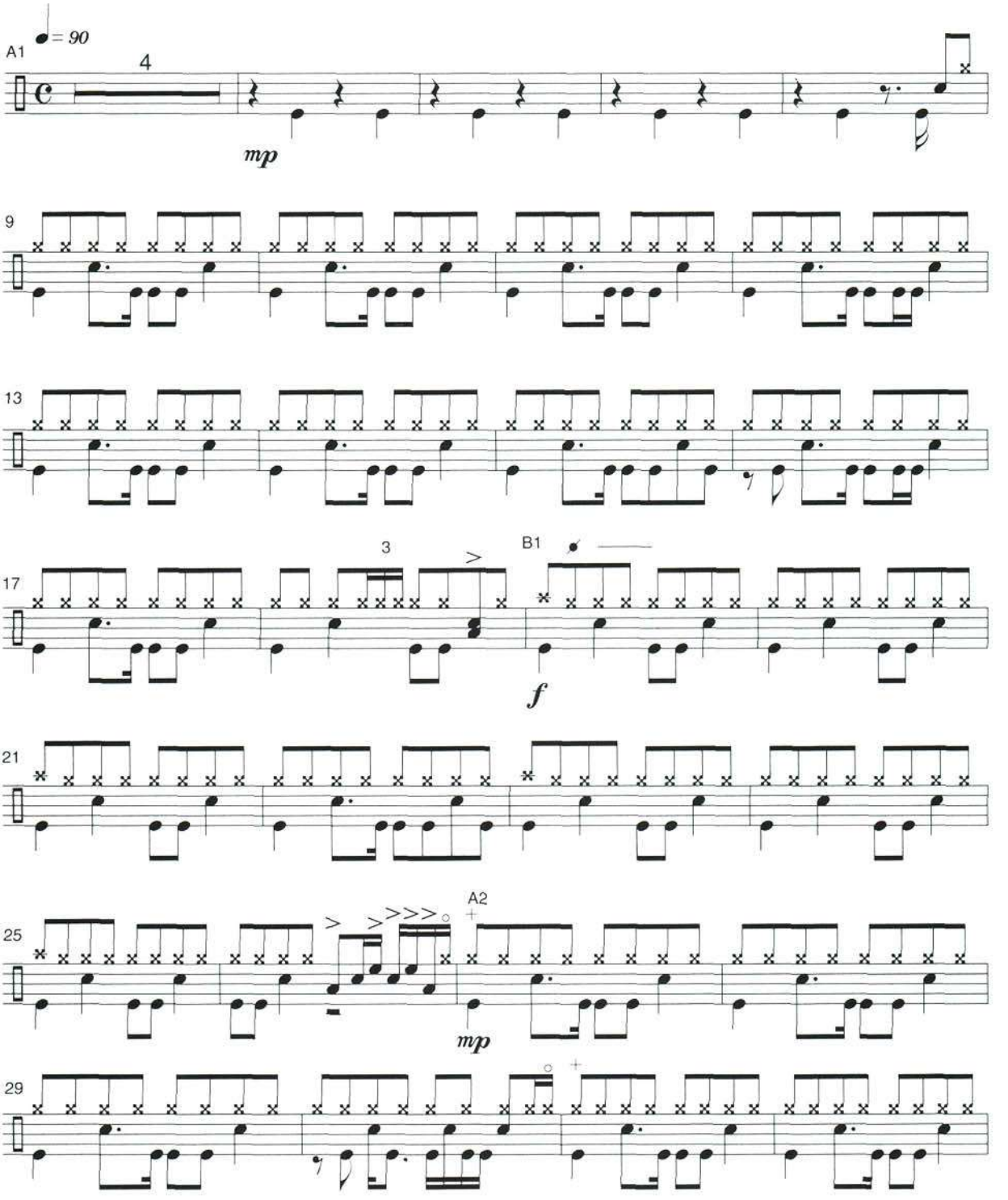
"Meet Virginia"

Transcribed by Joe Bergamini



Taken from Train's 1998 debut disc, this month's *Rock Charts* shows drummer Scott Underwood laying down a solid groove with some tasty touches. Train's music is straight-ahead rock with hints of funk and a quirky personality in both the lyrics and instrumentation.

One of the most important aspects of this chart is dynamics: The "A" sections are played lightly with a buoyant feel, while the "B" sections drive hard and loud. Also of interest are some of the little syncopations and hi-hat flourishes that Scott throws in. The end of the song features a ride cymbal groove with the hi-hat foot playing the "&'s" of 2 and 4, which adds a nice lift to the climax of the song.



"Meet Virginia"

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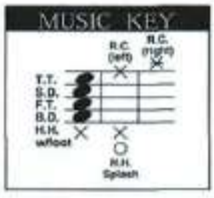
Monk And You

Orchestrating Melodies On The Drums

by Drori Mondlak



Thelonious Monk was a pioneering bebop composer and pianist. As a player, he was highly individualistic with a unique and personal approach to his instrument. As a composer, his works are as unusual as his piano playing.

Listening to and learning Monk's music offers us an opportunity to become acquainted with this truly singular musician. Being familiar with Monk's tunes—many of which are considered jazz standards—is a *must* for anyone interested in playing the style. You'll undoubtedly come across them in performing situations, so they should be a part of the arsenal of tunes that you put to memory.

As a drummer, I've always enjoyed playing Monk's music because each tune has its own rhythmic identity. He uses strong rhythmic motifs, develops them within the tune, and makes tremendous use of a few ideas. Each of Monk's tunes has a real sense of architecture, and their angular form makes them fun to play.

Learning Monk's music can help you develop an awareness of architecture, phrasing, use of space, and motif development. Applying this awareness to your soloing can help you become a more interesting and musical soloist, and to capture the essence of the material that the solo is based on. Like a wonderful poem, a great solo tells a story with passion.

Here's a method for learning Monk's melodies and applying them directly to the drums. I've found this approach to be inspiring, creative, and challenging.

Don Hunstein

First, pick one of Monk's tunes and learn to sing the melody along with the recording. Once you know the melody, sing it without the recording. Memorize it.

Next, transcribe the rhythm of the tune and play it on the snare drum while singing it out loud and playing 2 and 4 on the hi-hat with your left foot.

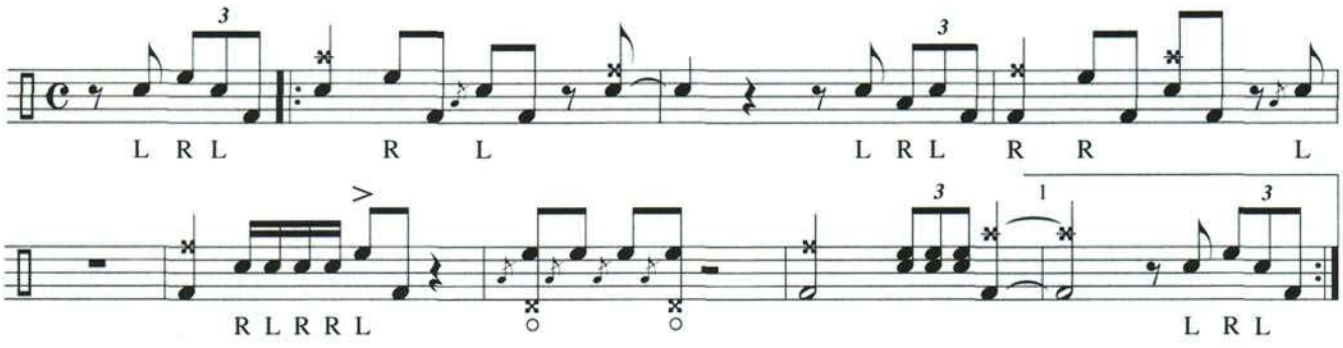
Next, orchestrate the rhythm of the melody on the full drumkit using all the sounds available to you. Take the first motif and create an abstract representation of it that sounds good to you and gives the listener a sense of that motif. When you come up with something you like, write it down and move on.

You're not trying to re-create the melody contours in terms of pitch, since drums are not a fixed-pitch instrument. Rather, you're creating *your* representation of the melody. Work at the melody on the drums so that what you come up with will have a natural flow among your limbs.

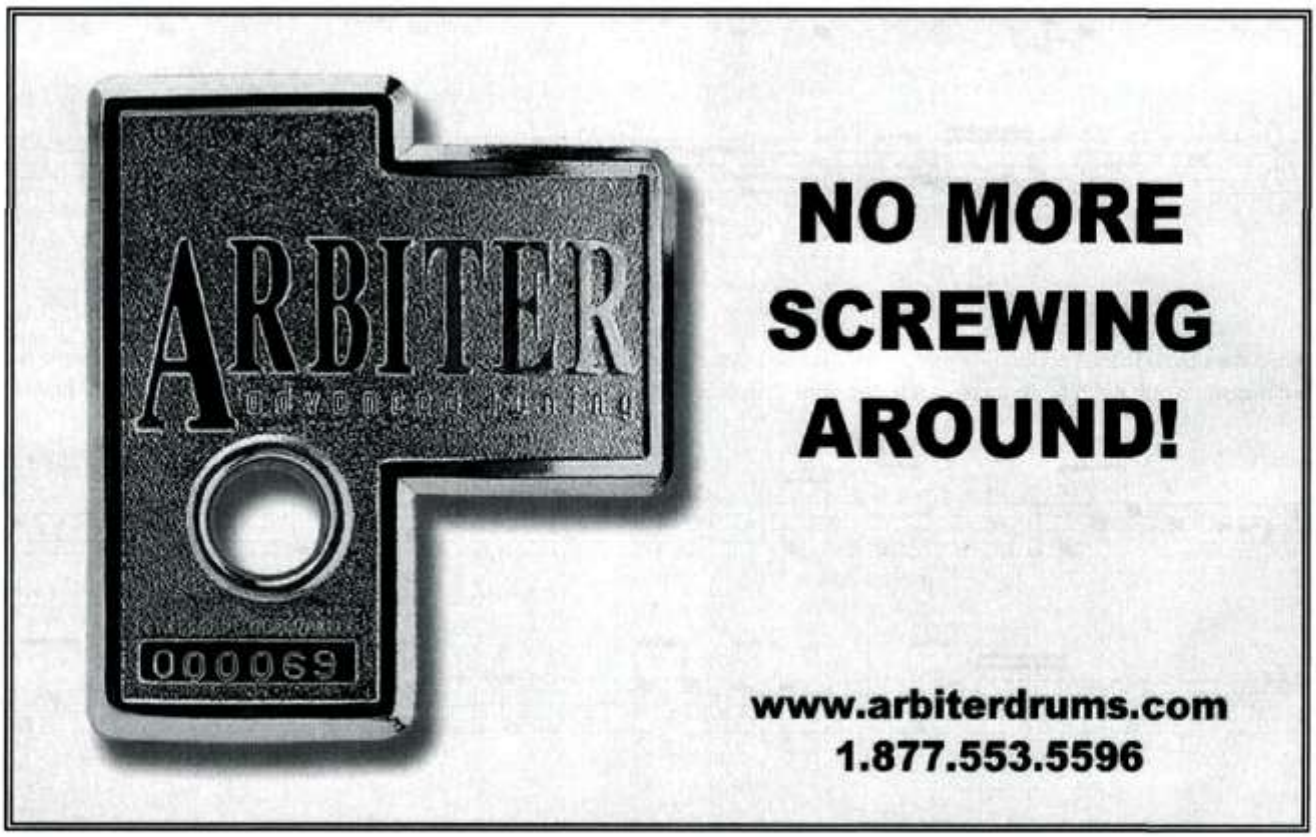
Once you're happy with your orchestration, learn it, and then improvise on it. Sing the original melody in your head while improvising. Use some of the material from your orchestration, let your imagination go, and play what you hear in your head over the melody.

Okay, time for a quick example of this approach. Let's take a look at the tune "Monk's Dream." First, learn the melody. (You can find "Monk's Dream" on his Columbia release *Monk's Dream, The Thelonious Monk Quartet.)* Here's the melody written out.

Give the tune a listen and then memorize the melody. Once you have it memorized, it's time to transfer it to the drums. Here's one way I interpreted the melody on the drums. (This example was created on a basic four-piece kit with two cymbals and hi-hats.)



Other Monk tunes to check out include "Well You Needn't," "Rhythm-A-Ning," "I Mean You," "In Walked Bud," "Bemsha Swing," "Blue Monk," "Straight No Chaser," "Think Of One," "Eronel," "Bye-Ya," "Let's Call This," and "Epistrophy." Learning these tunes and orchestrating them on the drums will certainly help you develop your ability to be a melodic soloist.



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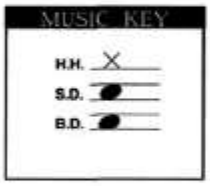
Linear Paradiddle Grooves

by Darryn Farrugia



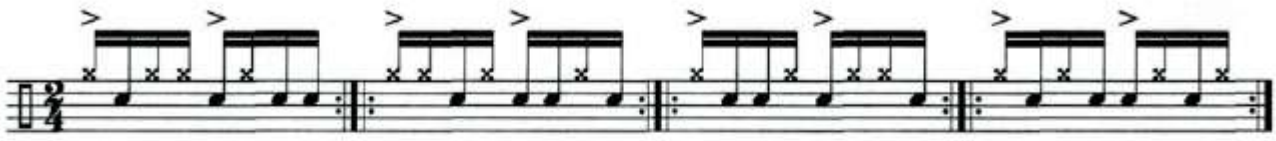
Paradiddles have always served as an excellent tool for developing drumset language in the areas of soloing and time playing. It's been a mission of mine to encourage students to practice and develop paradiddles and, more importantly, to demonstrate various ways that paradiddles can be used in musical contexts rather than simply being relegated to the practice pad.

A single paradiddle and its three inversions, "Reverse," "Inward," and "Outward" paradiddles, can be used to develop linear grooves. These are grooves based on a "line" of notes, as opposed to the "layering" of notes. Basically this means that in the linear style no two sounds occur simultaneously. This type of broken-up feel lends itself well to funk and fusion-type drumming.

To start with, become familiar with the four paradiddles. (Note the placement of an accent on each quarter note.)

The most important aspect of linear time playing is the application of dynamics. First, move your right hand to the hi-hat and keep your left hand on the snare drum. Play all of the right-hand accents with the "shoulder" of the stick on the edge of the hi-hat, and play the non-accents with the tip of the stick on top of the hi-hat. The left-hand or snare-drum accents should be played as rimshots, and the non-accents should be ghost strokes (light strokes played from a height of around 1" off the head).

The key here is to relax and aim for a good dynamic range. If your dynamics are too "compressed" and your ghost strokes are too loud, the grooves will end up sounding cluttered and busy.



The next step is to substitute various hand strokes with the bass drum to introduce the third voice in our linear patterns. You'll notice that we've kept the accented stroke on beat 2 on the snare drum as the "backbeat." We've also kept the "double" (RR or LL) intact to retain the continuity of each paradiddle.

Single Paradiddle

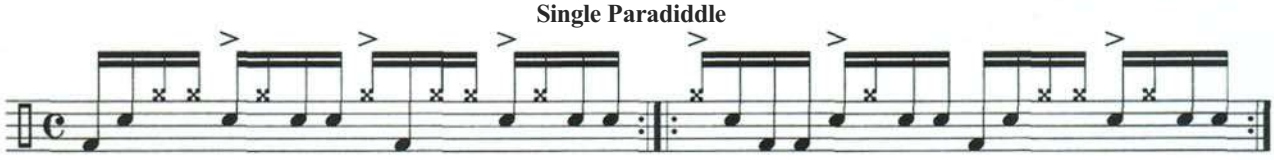
Reverse Paradiddle

Inward Paradiddle

Outward Paradiddle

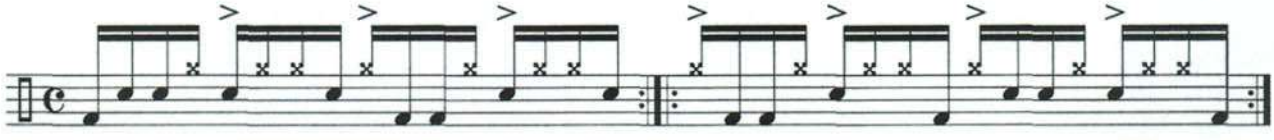
You can then create 4/4 examples of each paradiddle type by combining various 2/4 examples.

Single Paradiddle



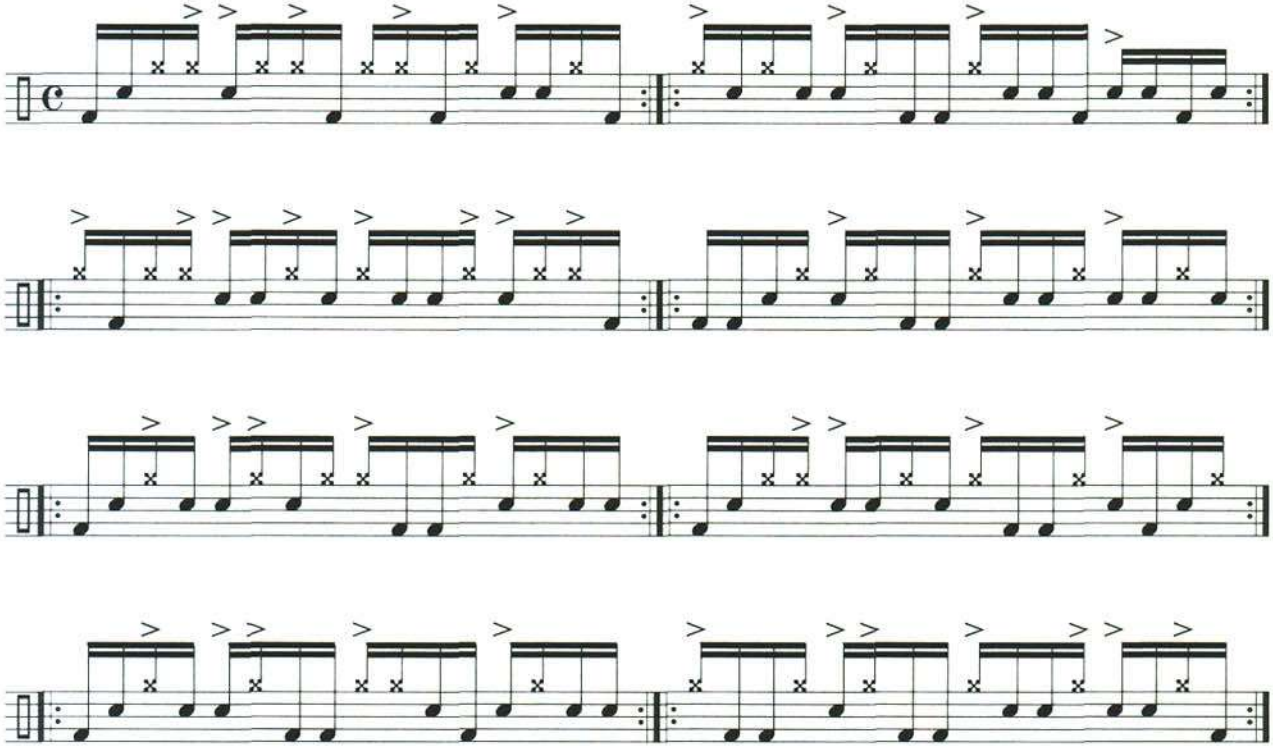
Reverse Paradiddle

Inward Paradiddle



Outward Paradiddle

The final step is to create more "random"-sounding linear grooves by combining any of the four paradiddle inversions within one measure. I've also varied the placement of the accents to help disguise the paradiddles.



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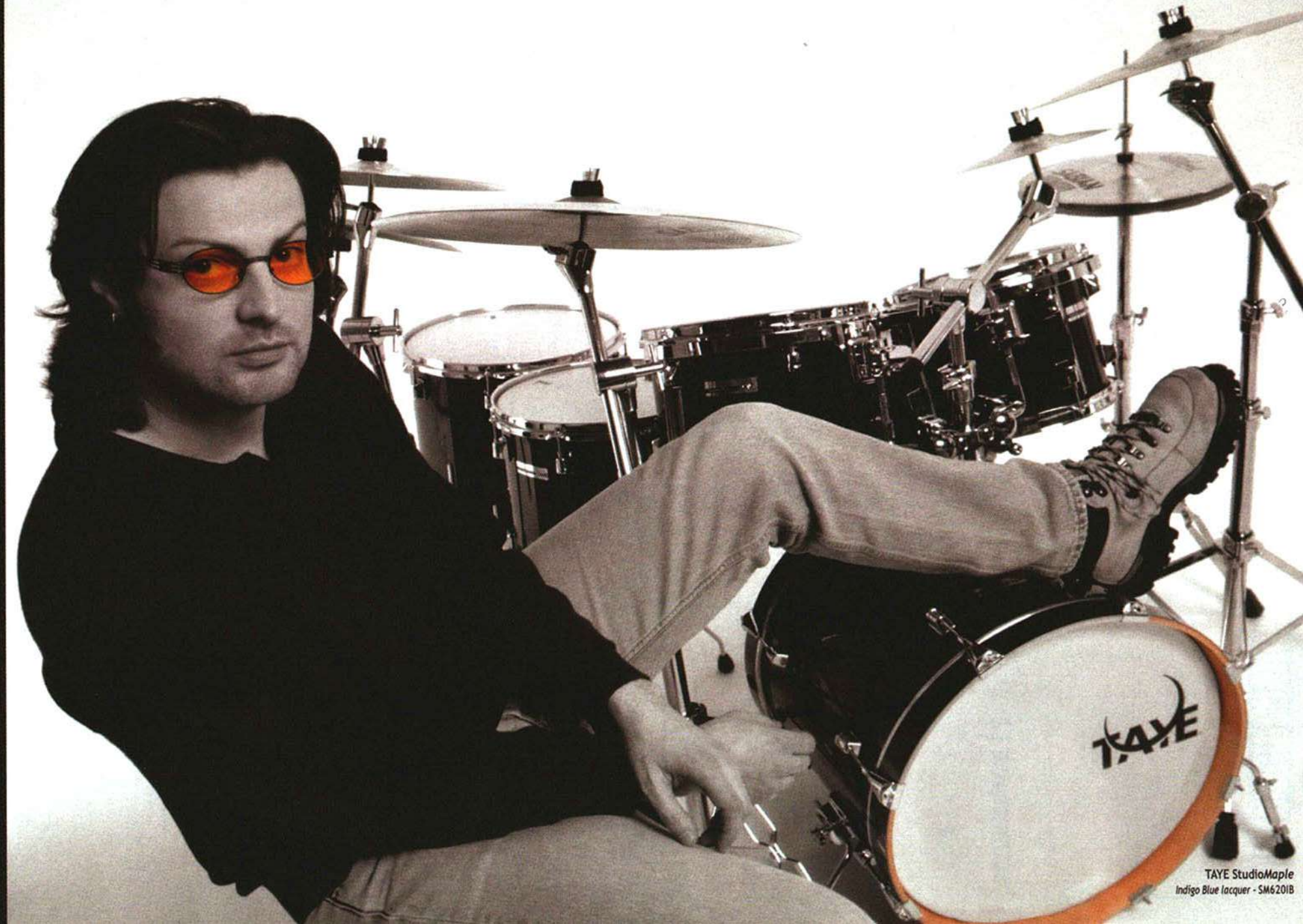

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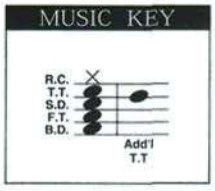
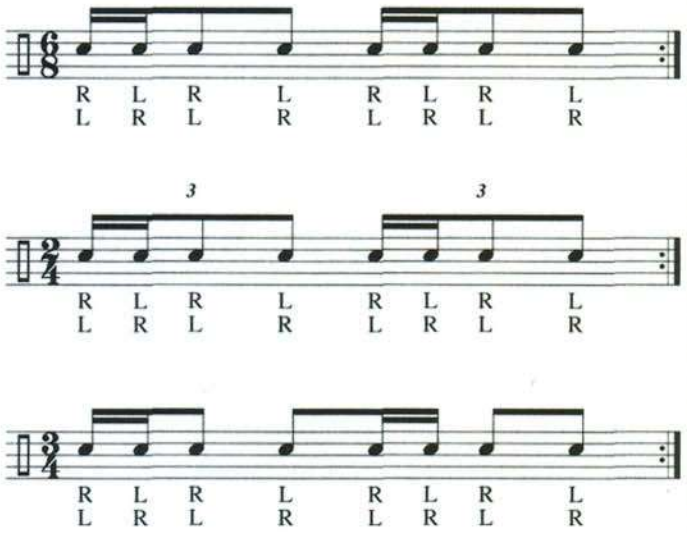
Three And One

A Classic Fill

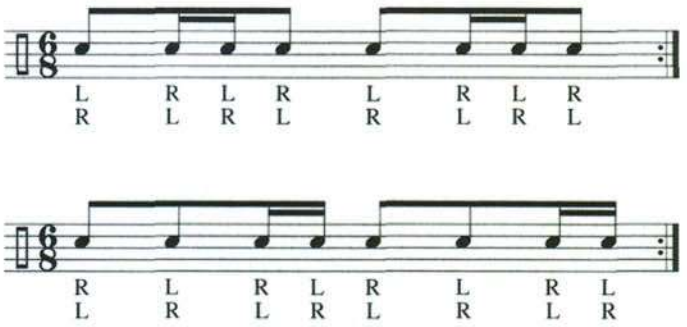
by Ed Breckenfeld



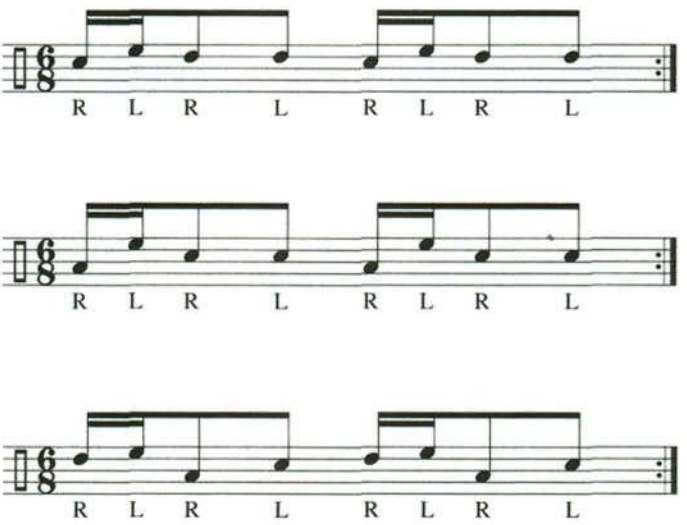
Here's a flashy little single-stroke lick that's a showstopper in fast drum fills. Players like Billy Cobham (credited as the originator of this pattern), Neil Peart, and Carter Beauford have done great things with it. This rhythm can be notated and played in a variety of ways. Notice the grouping of three notes and one note in each example.



Begin by playing this rhythm slowly on the snare drum. Then gradually increase the speed to as quickly as you can go. Make sure that your spacing is correct at all tempos. The faster you can play this pattern, the more fun you'll have with it. (The 16th-note placement can be changed for different effects.)



This rhythm can also be broken up among different drums.



Now let's apply this pattern to some drum fills. We'll start by putting it in triplet form and matching each fill to a typical shuffle groove.

An interesting way to use this rhythm is to take it out of triplets and have it "move against the beat" in a straight-8th-note groove.

Progressive rock, jazz, and fusion drummers have come up with some of the most impressive uses of this pattern. Many of these have been in half-time funk grooves, with the fill played as 16th and 32nd notes. Here are some examples of this style.

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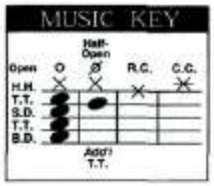


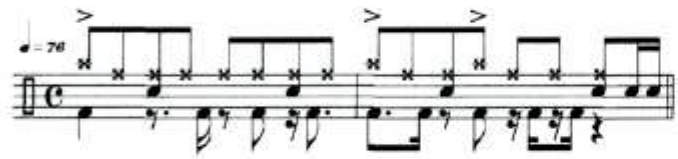
On the strength of the hit singles "Hemorrhage (In My Hands)" and "Innocent," Fuel's second major-label release followed their first album, *Sunburn,* to platinum status. This quartet from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania balances a hard-edged alternative sound with melody and dynamics, giving drummer Kevin Miller plenty to work with. Let's look at some of his ideas from *Something Like Human.*

"Last Time"

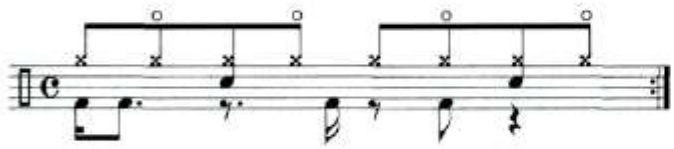
In the verse of the opening track, Kevin creates an interesting two-measure pattern by changing a single offbeat from snare drum to bass drum.

"Hemorrhage (In My Hands)"

Here's a sequence on ride cymbal from the end of this tune's first chorus.



Kevin then switches from the ride to a "barking" hi-hat pattern in the verse.



"Empty Spaces"

This track starts with a great opening fill. When the beat kicks in, Kevin combines hi-hat accents with offbeats on the bass drum for a polyrhythmic effect.

"Bad Day"

The second-verse groove in this one features some well-designed cymbal work.

After a slight pause, Kevin slams into the last few bars of the song with a flam drum fill.

"Prove"

A quarter-note crash pattern drives the beginning of this track.

"Innocent"

Following a soft guitar/vocal opening, Kevin launches into this tune with another cool entrance fill.

Kenny Graeber

Raleigh, North Carolina's Kenny Graeber spent his high school years drumming in marching bands, jazz ensembles, and local rock bands. In the early '90s he toured with a variety of regional acts, opening for such bands as Journey, Hootie & The Blowfish, Kenny Wayne Shepard, and Foreigner.

Now twenty-eight, Kenny divides his playing time between three different bands: Punch Drunk Piranha, Shoe, and The Ultraviolets. Performing with the three groups has taken him throughout the Carolinas, as well as to New York City, Delaware, Virginia, Georgia, and Alabama. A demo tape featuring music by each group displays distinctly different musical styles. Fortunately, Kenny's versatility allows him to complement and support the music of each group. He cites "Frosty" Smith, John Bonham, Neil Peart, Matt Cameron, Alex Van Halen, Matt Abts, and Larry Mullen Jr. as influences.

Kenny's gear includes Orange County Drum & Percussion and Premier Signia Marquis drumkits, Premier, Pork Pie, Mapex, and Yamaha snares, Zildjian cymbals, Evans heads, and Trueline sticks. "My goals are simple," he says. "I would like to make a living in the music business so that I can support myself and the people I care about, and hopefully get to a position where I can help those less fortunate than me."

Josh Riskin

Multi-talented individuals have been featured in On The Move before. But Josh Riskin is the first to possess his two particular talents: drumming and biochemistry!

Josh is a skilled drummer who divides his time between touring with Dan Hicks & His Acoustic Warriors and playing in the pit for San Francisco's super successful Beach Blanket Babylon show (now in its twenty seventh year), Josh has been with BBS for the past elevan years. He's also done session work for Web TV, the California State Lottery, Sega Games, and the PBS documentary Shakespeare's Children.

Like many other drummers, Josh had his sights set on being a drumming star. But he knew that in order to do that, he'd have to leave his family and friends in the Bay Area and relocate to a more lucrative "music city." This he was unwilling to do. "I realized that if I wasn't going to be the next 'JR' Robinson," Josh says, "I needed to develop another skill. So I studied chemistry while gigging - lugging my books through airports and studying in hotel rooms. Every cent of my education costs was earned by playing drums." After earning his BS degree, Josh became a research chemist for a Bay Area biotech firm. He is currently working on synthesizing an experimental AIDS drug.

"Single-mindedness is important in achieving goals," Josh comments. "Still, having two simultaneous careers has taught me that being good at something else doesn't have to interfere with achieving success as a drummer."

Magesh

Twenty-three-year-old Magesh has been hailed as an up-and-comer on the Australian drumming scene. Currently, his main gig is The Midnight Review. In addition to their own performances, the group serves regularly as a backup band for recording artists doing TV and live appearances in Australia. Magesh recently appeared on Australia's Fox network backing American pop/R&B singer Anastacia.

Magesh was motivated to play drums as a career at the age of thirteen, after seeing Virgil Donati perform. "I locked myself in the bedroom and played till I dropped," he says. "I was playing in a rock band at school at the time, but it was nothing serious. After I saw Virgil, I knew that's what I wanted to do." Other influences include Jonathan Moffet, Will Calhoun, and Michael Bland.

A triple-threat musician, Magesh also plays keyboards and bass, and is a composer and singer. He puts all those skills to work in a studio project he calls The Secret Ingredient. His self-produced CD, *Pure,* features five smooth R&B/funk tunes with tasty melodies and great feels. Check it out at www.magesh.live.com.au.

Magesh is a clinician for Premier Sabian, and johnnyraBB and has appeared at Australia's Ultimate Drummers Weekend for the past four years. The event is the largest of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere. He plans a move to the US in 2002 in an effort to expand his career.

If you'd like to appear in *On The Move,* send us an audio or video cassette of your best work (preferably both solo and with a band) on three or four songs, along with a brief bio sketch and a high-quality color or black & white close-up photo. (Polaroids are not acceptable. Photos will not be paid for or credited.) The bio sketch should include your full name and age, along with your playing style(s), influences, current playing situation (band, recording project, freelance artist, etc.), how often and where you are playing, and what your goals are (recording artist, session player, local career player, etc.). Include any special items of interest pertaining to what you do and how you do it, and a list of the equipment you use regularly. Send your material to On The Move, Modern Drummer Publications, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009. Material **cannot** be returned, so please **do not** send original tapes or photos.

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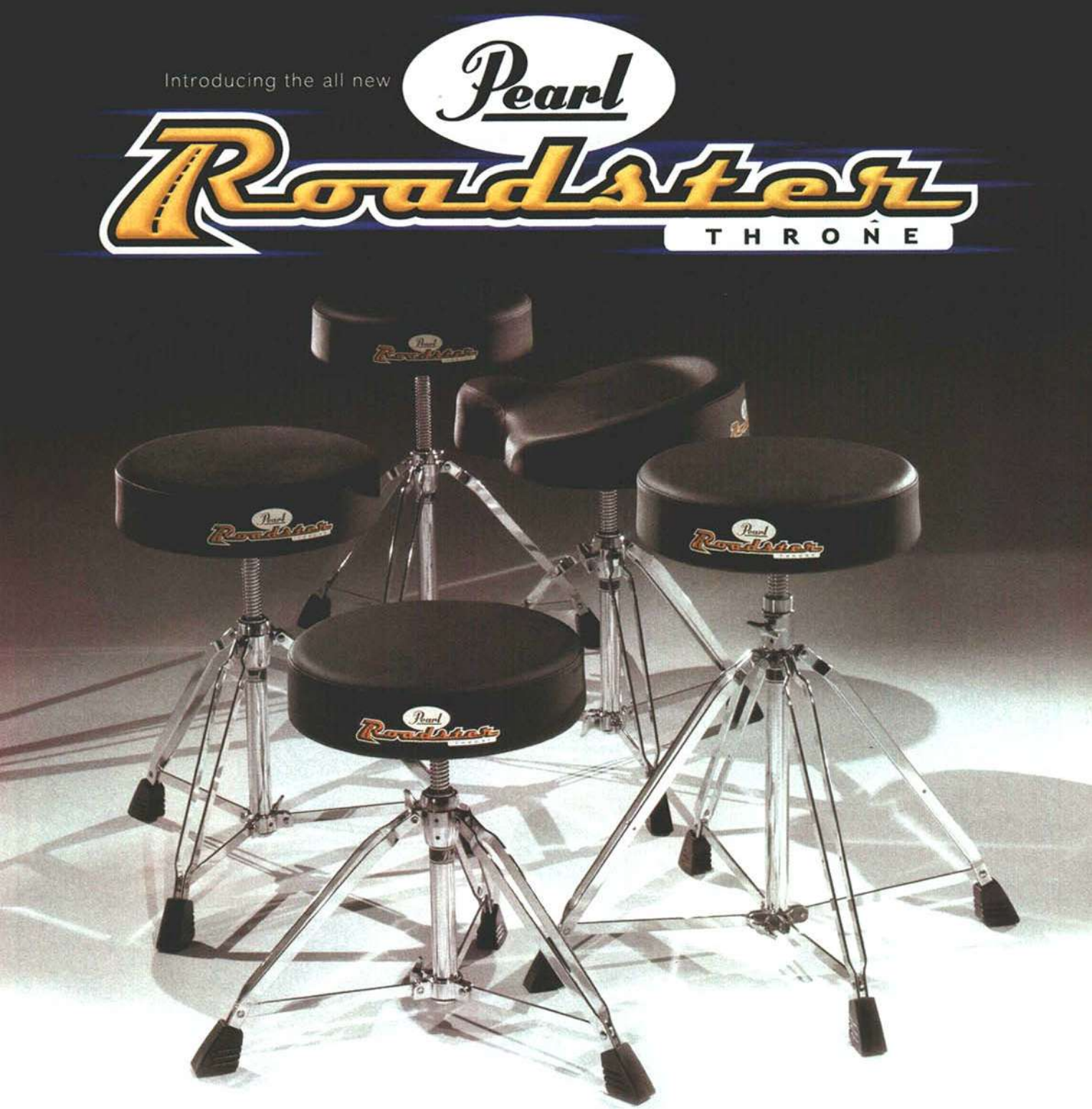

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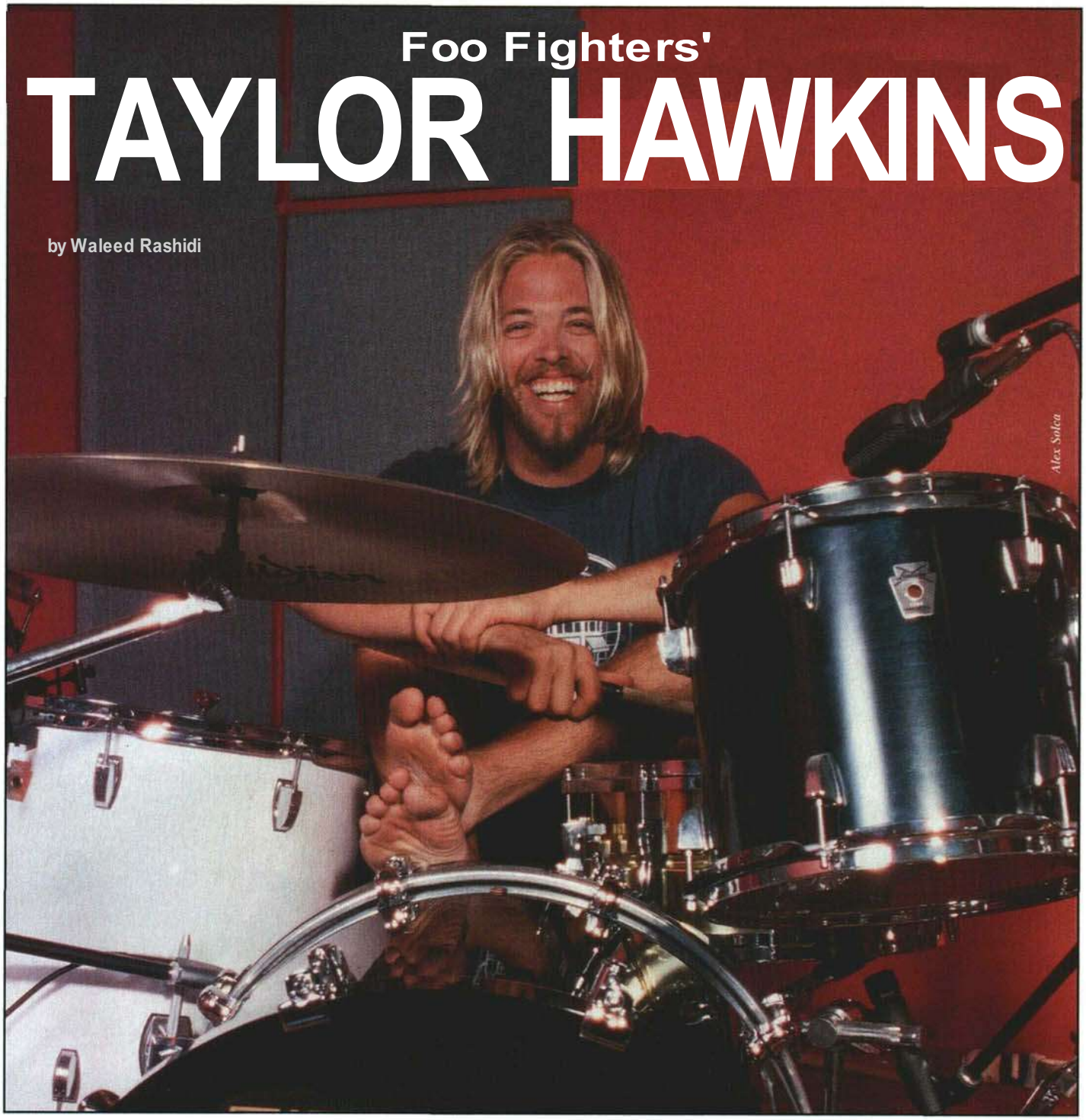
Foo Fighters'

TAYLOR HAWKINS

by Waleed Rashidi



Cannons Of The Canyon

A quick walk around the first floor of Taylor Hawkins' Topanga Canyon home reveals one constant sight at every turn: drums. Tucked behind a grand piano in the corner of his den are some large chrome-covered Ludwig tubs, all stacked up with a little road experience behind them. Tilt your head up from the entryway of the front door, and you'll see more Tama boxes than you have fingers. Hang a quick right from the entry into his newly built studio, and yes, another Tama kit lies within inches, with mic's set up all around it. There's no question that the thunderous backbone of Foo Fighters lives, eats, sleeps, and breathes drums.

The shaggy blonde-locked Hawkins grew up in Laguna Beach, an hour south of his current home and got his start with the Foos via his credentials with Alanis Morissette. Hawkins met with bandleader (and ex-Nirvana drummer) Dave Grohl, who, after jamming a few songs with Taylor, asked him to join.

Before I met Hawkins, I bumped into someone of significant importance to his home setup, master home studio builder and one of Hawkins' best friends, Michael Aloi. Aloi accepted and executed the challenge of making sure Taylor would be able to slam his Tama Starclassics in a fairly live environment—even at 2:00 A.M. Construction and design required a fair degree of thought and sweat, the result being one seemingly complicated sandwich of materials.

"We built walls inside the original walls," Aloi explains. "It's actually got a layer of soundboard on the back side of the wall, where it was built on the ground and then tilted up. Inside the wall, between the studs, there's Johns Manville Series 1000 compressed fiberglass, and we have R-19 insulation back in there as well, Then we have a layer of soundboard, and then sheetrock."

Hawkins and Aloi had the design down within a month, and after a couple more months of construction, Hawkins' space (which he playfully dubbed "Pussy Whipped Studios") was set in gear, complete with a 32-channel Mackie console, a Studer 2" reel-to-reel tape machine (re-christened "Stoner" with marker and masking tape), and enough outboard gear to keep the operation running smooth and clean.

The studio is even designed with style-subdued blood-red walls and ceilings, leopard-print carpet, Rickenbacker guitars and basses hanging from the walls (one was a gift from Grohl), and a grand portrait of Queen's Freddie Mercury that oversees all the operations in the control room.

Hawkins explains his reason behind having a convenient in-home studio setup: "Right now I've got this place down where we can do some amazing demos. And if we rented a couple pieces of gear, we could even do some record tracking."

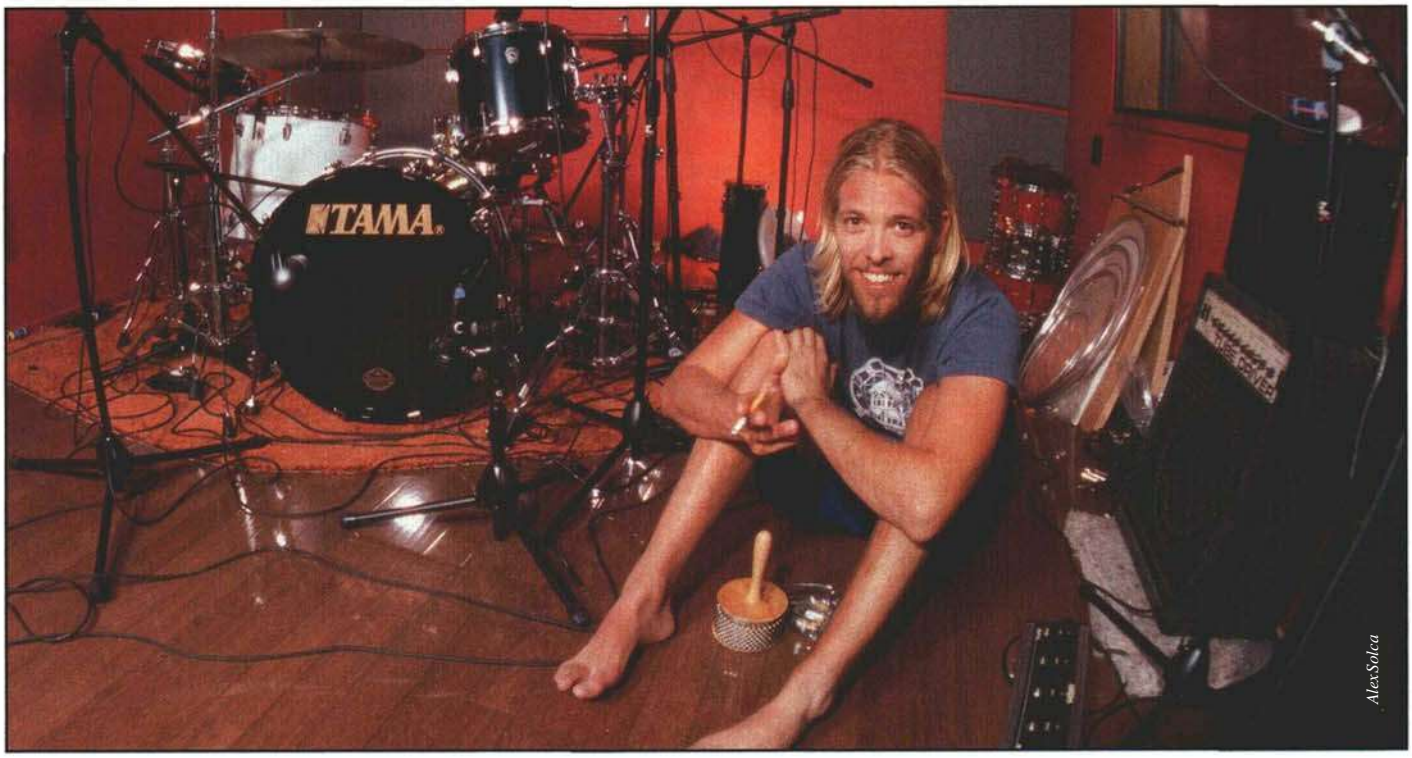
Hawkins admits that he's still getting a feel for his new workshop. "We're learning the room," he says. "We've got a snake in the hallway, so as soon as we've got our patch bay all hooked up, we can take advantage of the high ceilings in my living room, and track there. The sound in the tracking room can be changed very quickly. Right now it's very dead—we're talking Carpenters drums—but if you take half of those baffles off the walls, it gets pretty loud."

And as far as receiving any complaints from neighbors from any noise that happens to leak out of his house? "The people across the street are all cool. And the guys behind my house work on my Studer. So as long as it's not early in the morning, it's cool."

For a man who's known to crush his drums, Hawkins has been using his studio to hone a new dynamic: soft. "When you hit the drums too loud all the time, you have a limited dynamic range. So I'm learning to hit softer, but still have it sound hard on tape. Charlie Watts (of The Rolling Stones) didn't hit the drums all that hard, but he had an amazing drum sound. If you push the tape, you'll get distortion."

Hawkins has moved into a region of Los Angeles that puts him in good company with some notable drummers. "A lot of drummers live out here in the Valley," he says. "Elton John's drummer, Nigel Olsson, lives right down the street. Zoro lives close by—I took a lesson from him once, he's a nice guy. Stephen Perkins from Jane's Addiction and Porno For Pyros lives out here in the Valley. There's a lot of old-school guys out here too, because drummers were the guys who didn't get paid all that much, so they all bought little houses in the Valley."

And to Hawkins, that's all his house might be—a little place in the Valley. Yet there's enough talent and skill being coaxed and cajoled in his modest single-family dwelling to relabel his pad as the discrete gold mine of rock drumming.



Alex Solca

E-Drums 101

Finding Your Own Sound

by Rick Long

When drummers experience electronic drums for the first time, they're often astounded at the sound and performance choices available "right out of the box." But the flexibility that e-drums provide may be even more profound, allowing drummers to create completely unique setups. In this and future articles, we're going to explore well *beyond* the basic presets, in order to help you utilize the full potential of these powerful musical tools. Let's get right to business and take on the task of "finding your own sound."

The presets in most electronic kits aren't bad. Well, some of them *are* bad. All right, some of them are TERRIBLE. In order to overcome this problem, you need to be able to find your *own* sounds and create your own preset kits. This process isn't as difficult as it sounds. The tips that follow are pretty generic, but you will need to have a working knowledge of how your own particular sound module operates in order to apply them.

illustration by Joe King

To Begin With...

Start by finding a preset that you like. (A "preset" is a sound that was "pre-set" by the manufacturer and factory-installed in the module.) Maybe everything about it isn't perfect, but there is something about it that you like a lot. In particular, you need to find a preset with a kick sound that you like. You may find that that sound is actually two patches, or voices, put together.

What is a "patch," you ask? This is a term that's been around the keyboard-synthesizer world for a long while. The first synthesizers were made up of rack-mounted modules. One was the oscillator that created the basic tone. The next was a filter that modified the tone. Various other tone-shaping modules could be added. To get the sound you wanted, you ran a short cord (a "patch cord," like the one your guitar player uses between his or her stomp pedals) from one module to another. Once you got the sound you wanted, you would write down the "patch" configuration so that you could reproduce the sound later on.

Because of this bit of history, a sound on a synthesizer—be it a piano sound or a kick drum sound—is often referred to as a "patch." You'll also hear the more modern term "voice."

When you find the preset kick that you like, save it over to a "user kit." This means that you are going to take the preset kit, which can't be altered, and save it to an area where it can be altered. Most drum sound modules are designed so that half the kits are "permanent presets" that can't be altered, while the other half are user kits that can be manipulated. In order for the manufacturer to provide you with more kits to try out, the user kits often have drumkits already programmed into them. But the kit of your choice overwrites these when you save to that same user-kit number.

Let's say that your sound module has user kits on numbers 1-32 and permanent presets on 33-64. Take a look through your manual and find the voice listings for each preset. You can probably find a preset that includes many of the sounds you like. Use that as a starting point for creating your own preset with the sounds that you like best.

You find that you like permanent kit #47 "Fusion," but you want to tweak the hi-hats just a bit. Save it to user kit #32 "Bombastic Tubs." The "Fusion" kit from #47 is now copied into the memory area for kit #32, name and all. At this point, "Bombastic Tubs" no longer exists.

Next, look for a snare drum sound that you like. Let's say that you like the snare drum from the preset "Rock 1." You can't save this kit to #32 like we did before, since that would also overwrite the kick drum you've chosen. What you will have to do is look through the "voice" and "trigger" settings for the snare used in the "Rock 1" kit, and write them down. Then go to kit #32 and look through its snare-drum voice and trigger settings. Change those to match the ones that you wrote down from "Rock 1." Now you have your preferred kick and snare—the most important parts of the kit—ready for service.

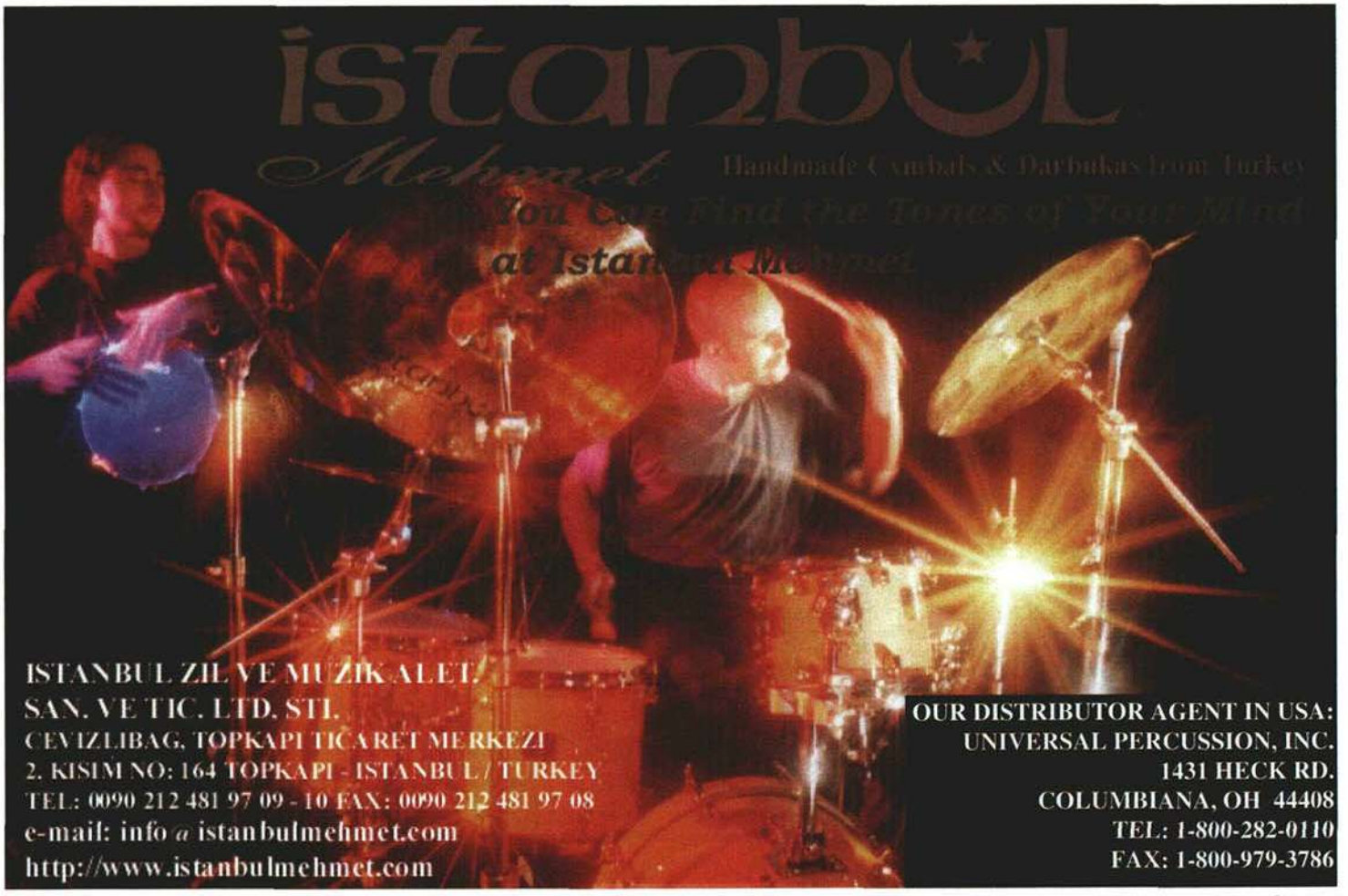
Moving On

Now it's time to set up the rest of the kit. Working within kit #32, go to the voice settings for the toms. Set all the pitch and filter settings to zero so that each patch you listen to plays without its sound being altered in any way. Scroll through the patches for toms and listen for a sound that you like. Some people will like one sound, and some another. Much of this depends upon the amplification you are using and the frequencies that the amp accentuates. (More about that in a future column.)

Once you have the tom sound you like, repeat the process to create a few different cymbal sounds. (If you have a DTX or DTXTREME system, visit my Web site, www.glassthunder.com, for a few suggestions on how to improve cymbal sound and response.)

For you double bass players, try modifying the open hi-hat sound so that you don't have to hold the hi-hat controller pedal down to get the closed hi-hat sound. There are two ways to go about this. You could change the voice of the open hi-hat to be a closed hi-hat patch. Do this by changing the MIDI note number for the open hi-hat in the trigger area to the MIDI note for the closed hi-hat. Just remember that for this particular drumkit preset, you'll have *only* the closed hi-hat sound.

Another way to get a closed hi-hat sound is to decrease the delay setting for the open hi-hat voice. (In other words, the



hi-hat will still play the "open" sound, but will cut off so quickly that it sounds closed.) Find the delay area in the voice settings. While playing the hi-hat pad, dial the delay down until you hear the hats start to close up. This is also an easy way to vary the setting of the hi-hats for that "slightly open" sound.

MIDI Who?

I mentioned the term "MIDI note number" in the previous section. Here's another electronic mystery to be demystified. What are MIDI note numbers, and why are they important? To understand this, think about the synthesizer that your band's keyboard player is using. It probably has sixty-one or more keys, which are connected to a computer chip that actually produces the sound when those keys are pressed. The electronic drumkit you own was built by a company that also makes synthesizers. They didn't want to reinvent the wheel when they decided to start making electronic drums. This means that your sound module has a chip inside it that is based on the same technology as the chip in the synthesizer.

Each preset drumkit is actually a set of sixty-one (or more) MIDI notes, with drum voices assigned to each note. The preset doesn't necessarily use every one of those note numbers on the kit, because you don't have sixty-one (or more) playing surfaces to assign the notes to. (Don't we all wish we did?) Anyway, a dozen or more of the MIDI notes in a preset are assigned to pads. This is done in the "trigger settings" area. In other words, your snare drum pad is a snare drum only because MIDI notes with the snare drum voices were assigned to that pad. It could just as easily be a cymbal, or a tom, or even a kick drum. On a synthesizer keyboard, Middle C is always Middle C, but on an electronic drumkit, any MIDI note number can be assigned to any pad.

Now that you know about MIDI note numbers, when you are setting up a custom kit for yourself, you can go about it in two ways. You can change the voice assigned to a MIDI note number in the "voice edit" area, or you can go to the "trigger edit" area and change the MIDI note assigned to a particular pad.

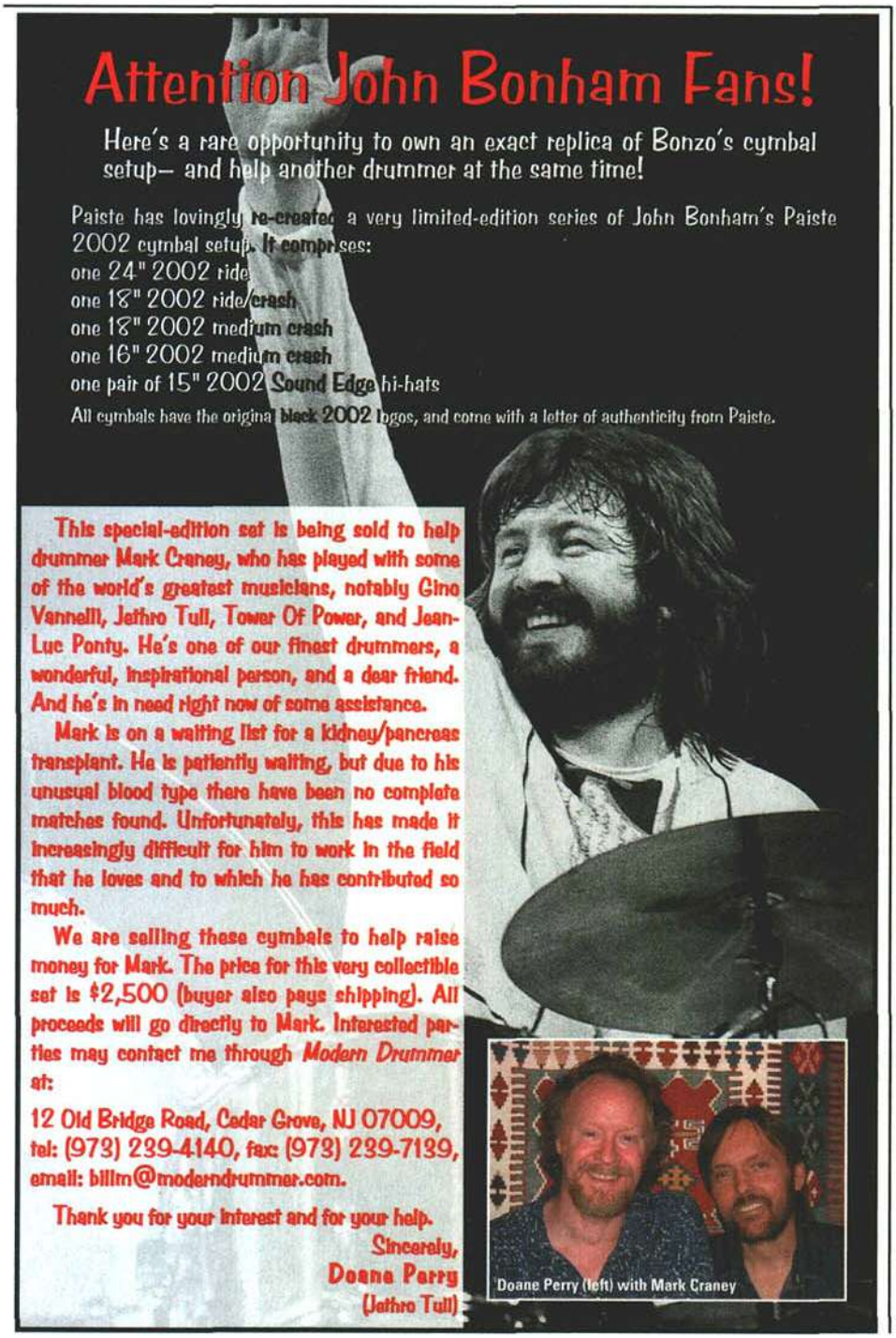
Let's Not Forget...

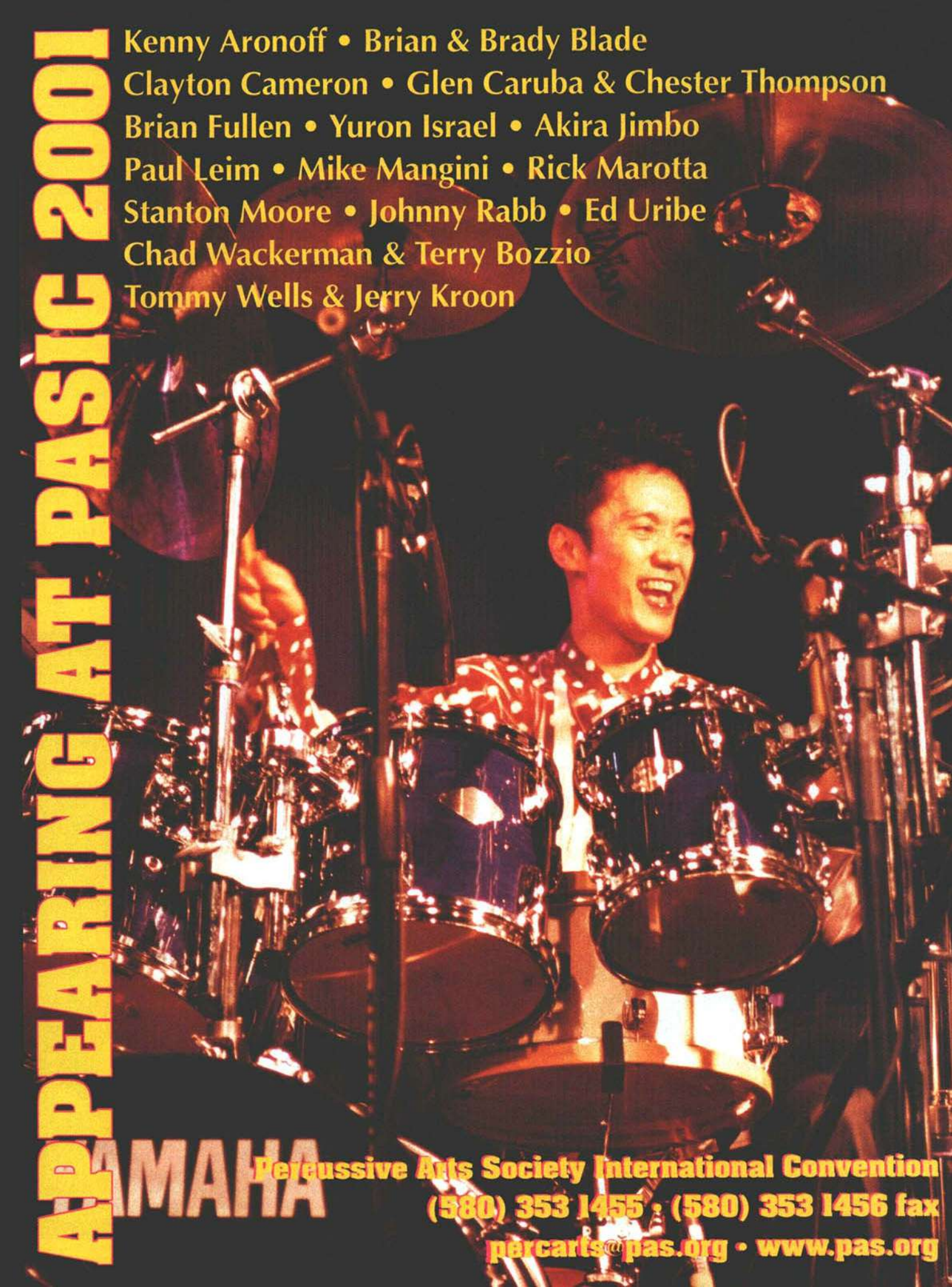
Once you've done all this hard work setting up your customized drumkit, you don't want to lose it. Sound modules are designed to hold your user kits in memory even if the unit is turned off. Look in the manual for the "save" function and go through the procedure that saves your new kit's data. You can then build new kits based on this customized kit by saving it to a new user-kit number and further modifying it from there.

A word of caution: The memory that is saving those new kits when the power is off is sustained by a small, internal battery. One day, that battery will run out of juice and your kits will go bye-bye. The batteries last several years, but if your kit is starting to get some age on it, you might think about having the battery replaced. These batteries are not available at your local Radio Shack. You'll need to order them from the manufacturer.

Self-Storage Facilities

Let me pose a hypothetical situation. Remember the "Bombastic Tubs" kit that

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Electronic Insights

we overwrote in the first part of this article? Well you just got a call from The Bash Band, and they need a sub drummer for some gigs this weekend. Their regular drummer has an e-kit just like yours—and plays virtually all of their material using the Bombastic Tubs preset. Problem is, you no longer have that preset. Well, you can get it back by doing a "factory reset," which restores all presets to their original settings. Of course, if you do this reset, you'll lose all your custom kits.

The solution to this situation is to save the sound module's internal data to a computer or a stand-alone MIDI data device. As a matter of fact, it's a good idea to do this as a standard procedure, just to have a safety backup of all the sounds you've created. You never know when some electronic gremlin will invade your sound module. (And remember what I said about the internal battery?)

Check your manuals to determine the data-dump "save kit(s)" function on your particular sound module, and the "sysx" ("system exclusive") area of the software sequencing program on your computer. When you tell the software to receive data, you may even find that your sound module is listed in the software. If it is, the software will take care of copying the data from the sound module into the sysx area for you. If your module is not listed, you'll have to tell it to dump the data after you set up the software to receive it.

Don't be afraid to try this. Sound-module and software manuals won't hurt you. Go ahead: Read a little in them. You'll find them to be much more interesting than you ever thought possible.

Now that you can set up custom kits with the sounds you like (and store those sounds for safekeeping), get out there and play your heart out. That's what the kit was built for anyway. In future columns I'll provide tips to make that playing even more creative and fun!

Rick Long is a working drummer and freelance writer from Southern California. He is a frequent contributor to Drum Business *magazine, also published by Modern Drummer Publications. For more information on electronic drumming, visit Rick's Web site at www.glassthunder.com.*

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Steve Ettleson

by Rick Van Horn

The drumming community lost a friend on Thursday, May 31 when a car struck Steve Ettleson as he crossed Ventura Boulevard in Studio City, California. A generation of drummers of all professional levels knew and respected Steve. With a unique background as both a player and a manufacturer's representative, he was the quintessential drummer-tumed-drurnmer's advocate.

Born in Chicago, Steve studied there with Chicago Symphony percussionist Gordon Peters while in high school. He attended Berklee College of Music in Boston (where he befriended classmate and future *Modern Drummer* founder Ron Spagnardi), then returned to Chicago to earn a BA degree in percussion performance from DePaul University.

Steve began his playing career in Chicago during the late 1960s. He did studio work, and was the house drummer in the legendary original Playboy Club. After moving to LA in the early '70s, Steve played for the LA production of *Hair,* and for the *Name That Tune* TV show. He also backed such artists as Pearl Bailey, Leslie Uggams,: Perry Como, and Juliet Prowse.

In 1982 Steve entered the business side of drumming when he became the marketing/artist relations manager for Paiste Cymbals. There he discovered a talent for making personal connections with drummers, which allowed him to serve their best interests while promoting those of his company. It was this talent that created enduring relationships between Steve and many of the world's most prominent drummers.

Steve worked for Drum Workshop briefly in 1986 before beginning an eight-year tenure as marketing development manager for Yamaha Drums. From 1994 through 1996 he was director of drumset development, artist relations, and promotions for Remo, and he served in a similar capacity for Evans/D'Addario from 1996 to 2000. At the time of his death he was about to take on a new position with the Mapex Drum Company.

Upon learning of Steve's death. Peter Erskine commented, "Steve embraced the drumming world with all of his heart and soul. He understood the music, the players, and the instruments. In some manner or form he has helped every drummer in the business. His boundless enthusiasm for music and his incredible sense of humor made him the 'dream ally' for any drummer to have—even if he was working for a different company than one you might be associated with! This was because Steve truly loved music above all other things. For me, Steve defined all the best things about the music industry, drumming, and friendship."

Ron Spagnardi adds, "Steve Ettleson was one of the nicest gentleman in our industry. We remained the dearest of friends for the many years since we were together at Berklee. We'd have dinner every year on the Friday evening prior to MD's Festival Weekend as a traditional good luck omen. We did so this year, as usual—less than two weeks before his accident. I am devastated by this tragedy, and I will miss Steve more than words can ever say."

At the Percussive Arts Society's 2000 convention in Dallas, Steve was presented with the PAS President's Industry Award in recognition of his service to the percussion community. To honor his memory, the PAS has established the Steve Ettleson Scholarship Fund. Donations may be made to the fund in care of the Percussive Arts Society, 701 NW Ferris Ave., Lawton, OK 73507, (580) 353-1455.

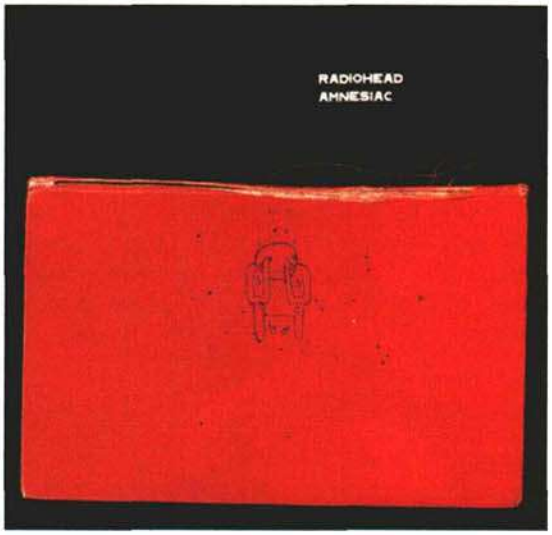
Peter Erskine comments provided courtesy of Rick Mattingly and the Percussive Arts Society.

RECORDINGS

poor 0 ratingscale 10 classic

8 Radiohead Amnesiac

Phil Selway (dr), Thom Yorke (vcl, gtr), Ed O'Brien (gtr, vcl), Jonny Greenwood (gtr), Colin Greenwood (bs)



Kid A, Radiohead's follow-up to 1997's revered *OK Computer,* was a gorgeous, if to some ears impenetrable, avant-garde pop experience. *Amnesiac,* an alternate collection of songs recorded during the *Kid A* sessions, is far from the rumored "accessible album" they were holding for later release. Rather, whatever you felt about *Kid A,* you're likely to feel about *Amnesiac.* And if you were among those who thought drummer Phil Selway's contributions to *Kid A* were subtly inspiring, you're sure to dig his wily ways this time out too. "Pyramid Song" is a sea of odd phrases that he navigates like Gene Kelly on a Yellow Submarine. "Dollars & Cents" inserts cool post-production into a typically lovely tom pattern. Elsewhere, remarkable rhythm programming takes over—and this should be studied as well. After all, inspiration comes in different guises. And Radiohead, though at times confounding, is *never* short on that score. (Capitol)

Adam Budofsky

8 The Chick Corea New Trio Past, Present & Futures

Jeff Ballard (dr), Avishai Cohen (bs). Chick Corea (kybd)

After three years, Corea has taken the rhythm section of his acoustic jazz group Origin and created a trio as telepathic as his Akoustic band with Dave Weckl and John Patitucci. The New Trio covers many styles in creative fashion, including swing, waltz, rumba, tango, and classical overtones. This is one of Chick's most musically sensitive and in-sync small groups, showing a maturity typically heard from the elder statesmen of jazz. Ballard displays a smooth, dynamic touch that never focuses on chops or drifts from the often challenging arrangements. When a drummer can blend this well with a composer as strong as Corea, he has certainly earned his wings. (Stretch)

Mike Haid

7 Melvins Electroretard

Dale Crover (dr, gtr), King Buzzo (vcl. gtr), Kevin Rutmanis (bs)

For an in-depth description of the deep, dark, intoxicating Melvins sound, see this month's Stoner Rock feature. Let's just say here that *Electroretard* might not be the band's best-ever record—then again, even a mediocre pint of Guinness is pretty darned heavenly. *Electroretard* features, well, electronically FUBAR'd versions of old Melvins tunes, plus covers of The Cows, Greg Sage, and Pink Floyd. Dale Crover slams like he's possessed on the nine-minute marathon "Youth Of America." On the forty-six-second "Gluey Porch Treatments," he makes 5/4 time seem even stranger than it is. And on "Missing," our favorite space explorer reminds us that bass drum notes sound cooler the farther apart they are played, rather than the other way around. (Man'sRuin)

Adam Budofsky

NEW ON DVD

Pearl Jam and Blue Man Group

Matt Cameron fans should look out for the new DVD from Pearl Jam, *Touring Band 2000.* To these ears some of the tempos are too fast and the guitar sound too unchanging, but the performances are strong and camera angles are revealing. Speaking of which, on three songs—"Evacuation," "Evenflow," and "In My Tree"—we get the benefit of being able to switch to the "Matt Cam," a camera setup just to Cameron's right. Imagine sitting on stage during a Pearl Jam concert, in a big ol' comfy chair, five feet away from the drummer, as he slams the living heck out of his seven-piece Ayotte kit. (Wonder what that weird drum to Matt's left is....) Pretty cool. Also featured are unreleased instrumental outtakes from the *Binaural* album, backstage and on-the-road footage, and the music videos for "Do The Evolution" and "Oceans," both previously unreleased in the US. (Sony)

Blue Man Group's DVD *Audio* is actually just that—not a DVD of new visual material, but a 5.1 surround-sound mix of their album of the same name. To quote the cover text, "Although *Audio* does contain photos and a small amount of interview footage, it is meant to be used primarily as a listening experience." Actually, the relatively small amount of interview footage is so darned funny, and the brief performance clips so interesting (more so than the music, truth be told), this package is worth the price even if you can't take full advantage of the 5.1 format. (Virgin)

Adam Budofsky

6 Pennywise Land Of The Free?

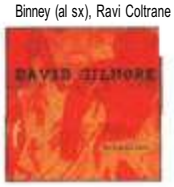
Byron McMackin (dr), Fletcher Oragge (gtr), Jim Lindberg (vcl). Randy Bradbury (bs)

Following in the tracks of their mentors Bad Religion, Pennywise have a firm grasp on the darker Southern California skate-punk torch. On *Land...* the band maintains the forceful sound that sparked attention in the early 1990s, beginning with their second full-length, *Unknown Road.* Byron McMackin's performance is solid, as he maintains his no-nonsense approach to the kit with simple yet effective fills and breaks. The deep, dead toms, loosely tensioned snare, and washy, clangy hi-hat don't suit the faster tracks all that well, making some details confusing rather than distinct. But McMackin's continued use of uncomplicated performance elements complements a band that already proved their talent years ago. (Epitaph)

Waleed Rashidi

8 David Gilmore Ritualism

Bruce Cox, Rodney Holmes (dr), Daniel Moreno (perc), David Gilmore (gtr). George Colligan (kybd), Brad Jones (bs), Ralph Alessi (trp), David Binney (al sx), Ravi Coltrane (tn 8 sp sx), Sharrif Simmons, I mani Uzuri (vcl)



A talented guitarist heard with Wayne Shorter, Steve Coleman, Cassandra Wilson, and others, David Gilmore makes fine use of drummers Bruce Cox and Rodney Holmes on his debut recording as leader—an engaging, free-blowing modern jazz trip. Kicking the record off with some tasty stickwork, Cox goes on to start a brush fire on "Kaizen" and mix a big band feeling and some slinky grooving on "Off Minor." Rodney Holmes displays a dynamic set of hands, big ears, playful syncopation, and spry Latin jazz chops on "Uncertainty Principle," applies clever counterpoint to "Paradigm Shift," and puts the heart in soul on "Reality Check," making music out of a riff-heavy tune. (www.dgilmore.cnm)

Robin Tolleson

7 Wellwater Conspiracy The Scroll And Its Combinations

Matt Cameron, (dr, vcl, gtr, kybd), John Paul McBain (gtr, bs, dr, kybd), others

Wellwater Conspiracy uses '60s psycho garage rock a la "Incense And Peppermints" and "I Had Too Much To Dream Last Night" as their jumping-off point. But their songs are way too ambitious for them to be tagged as retro fetishists. Take the Bo Diddley-beatific "I Got Nightmares": WC mess with your head by distressing the breaks, and ex-Soundgardener Matt Cameron delivers anything but a standard approach to a cliche rhythm. Elsewhere the band experiments with odd times, sounds, and lyrics, and almost without fail Matt takes the road less traveled. I mean, who in 1966—or 1996 for that matter—would come up with his choppy but somehow perfect part for the Kinks-y "Tick Tock 3 O'clock"? Eight miles high and climbing. **(TVT)**

Adam Budofsky

7 G. Love & Special Sauce The Electric Mile

Jeffrey "Thunderhouse" Clemens (dr, perc), Billy Conway, Dave Geller (perc), G. Love (vcl, gtr, barm), Jim Prescott (ac bs), John Medeski (kybd), Jamie Janover (hammer dulc. perc), Little Frankie (lap steel)

Clemens kick-starts this mutha with a rapid-fire swing beat in the opener, "Unified." This bombastic overture gives us a snippet of the percussive treasures within. In "Parasite," funky shuffles and multi-layered syncopated rhythms shadow G.'s rolling, bile-filled rap lines. Throughout the disc, the drums ring with such tone that they become part of the melody. And when the songs turn more plaintive and bluesy, Clemens manages to inject a bit of the funk. He seems to know what's best. His relaxed hip-hop vibe befits the breathy "100 Magic Rings," while his 16th-note triplets in the title track's disco-esque intro perfectly mimic rattling guitar and bass lines. (Epic/Okeh)

Will Romano

WHAT IN THE WORLD

7 Shankar Eternal Light

This beautiful CD commemorates twenty-five years of Shakti performing together. It's also a heartfelt tribute to the late, great master of the tabla Ustad Alla Rakha and his daughter Raxia. Shankar's sensual violin and vocals combine with the pure tabla fire of **Zakir Hussain** (Alla Rakha's son) and **T.H. Vinayakram's** ghatam (clay pot). (www.momentrecnrds.com)

6 Zion Kala: The Beginning Of The End

Sensitive and exciting Italian drummer/percussionist **Samuel Edazar Cereghini** and his wild ensemble Zion have created a soundtrack to take us to the place where all cultures will combine and freely exist ("living music without borders"). It would be nice to see a motion picture based on the creation of this global village! (www.ottonote.com)

7 Hellborg/Lane/Selvaganesh

Good People In Times Of Evil

This power trio of guitar (Shawn Lane), bass (Jonas Hellborg), and kanjeera **(V. Selvaganesh)** pushes the envelope right from the start. The sounds V. Selvaganesh gets from his kanjeera and udu drum bring the drumset to its knees and allow the full sound of the bass and guitar to be heard. Unbelievable South Indian vocal solos throughout are a real treat. (Bardo, www.hellborg.com)

7 George Mraz Morava

The superb bassist George Mraz has returned to his Moravian (Czech) roots with the help of long-time friend, pianist Emil Viklicky and vocalist and cymbalom player Zuzana Lapcikova. All compositions are by Emil and Zuzana; the lyrics are as beautiful as the melodies. Veteran drummer **Billy Hart** brightens every record he appears on, and this is no exception. (Milestone)

David Licht

6 Placebo Black Market Music

Steve Hewitt (dr), Brian Molko (vcl. gtr), Stefan Olsdal (bs. gtr. kybd)

Occasionally the English trio Placebo's third album, *Black Market Music,* which furthers a mix of 70s glam, '80s sheen, and '90s heavy guitar rock, will have you guessing whether Steve Hewitt's drums are programmed or looped. On the track "Black-Eyed," the repeating Motown-type drum fill is so perfect and concise, it's anyone's guess whether it's been doctored or not. Either way, Steve works it effectively. On the tracks where the live energy is certain, like "Special K" and "Days Before You Came," Hewitt grooves mightily and marks changes with some very physical fills. Placebo continues to explore retro English sounds without coming across as dated. **(Virgin)**

Billy Amendola

7 Brian Setzer '68 Comeback Special ignition!

Bernie Dresel (dr), Brian Setzer (gtr, vcl), Mark W. Winchester (bs)

Are The Stray Cats back? Well, not exactly—but mighty damned close, as The Brian Setzer '68 Comeback Special is a near-replica of the rockabilly trio that Setzer launched three decades ago. With an established rhythm section of drummer Bernie Dresel and bassist Mark W. Winchester (both of whom also perform in The Brian Setzer Orchestra), *Ignition!* serves some very accessible rockabilly tracks, much in the vein of a tamed Reverend Norton Heat. Dresel's shuffles are crisp and authentic, and they steer the trio with a bouncy, swingy authority while maintaining the ever-present downbeat. And Dresel is able to lock down the straight-ahead rock drive in *"'59"* quite nicely. *Ignition!* makes for a sincere fusion of the present and past. **(Surfdog)**

Waleed Rashidi

7 Antibalas Afrobeat Orchestra Liberation Afrobeat Vol. 1

Philip Ballman, Dylan Fusillo (dr), **Duke Amayo, Giancarlo Luiggi, Fernando Velez (perc),** others

J New York's Antibalas (which means "bulletproof," or "anti-bullet") is a steady-grooving fourteen-piece band that carries on the politically charged Afrobeat tradition established by Fela Kuti in the 70s. Though this debut LP is spiked with weighty musings on social and political injustice, it mostly plays like a rollicking multicultural party where all I are welcome (except maybe the NYPD). Soulful horns and polyrhythmic percussion dominate, with all eyes focused on dance and trance. Though the band is full of inspired soloists—there are some lip-smacking drum breaks too—the emphasis is on the bright tapestry of interlocking rhythms woven from the individuals' repeated patterns. The drummers keep it simple by working the pure funk without pulling any funny stuff. **(NinjaTune)**

Michael Parillo

7 Bliss 66 Trip To The 13th

Bob Cook (dr), Don Patty (bs). Jordan Barrett (kybd, vcl). Cheyenne Goff (vcl). Aaron Schossau (gtr), Rob Harbin (gtr. vcl)

Straight from the flatlands of the Midwest, Bliss 66, a young band with most of its members just out of high school, have a pretty good chance of heading straight to the top of the charts with their impressive debut, *Trip To The 13th.* Drummer Bob Cook plays well beyond his years throughout, sounding as comfortable as a seasoned session player. Cook plays powerful, well-thought-out drum parts on every cut of the album, which is filled with excellent songwriting and very strong melodies. Mega-producer Glenn Ballard directs the band, which at times sounds a little like a cross between Collective Soul and a heavier Matchbox Twenty, while still maintaining a sound of their own. Check this one out; it's well worth it. **(Epic)**

Billy Amendola

HOMEBREW

6 The Hermit Flying Out Of Solitude

Here's an unexpected delight. Canadian multi-instrumentalist Hamish Thomson, a.k.a. The Hermit, might be holed up indoors, but obviously it's time well spent. Like the work of compatriot Ryan Moore (Twilight Circus Dub Sound System), *Flying Out Of Solitude* emits none of that clinical hospital odor a lot of one-man-band recordings do. In fact, the grooves are so deep, it's hard to believe this is simply the result of extensive overdubbing. A mix of ambient, dub, and Tortoise-ian post-rock, Hermit music works as ultra-cool chill-out sounds, but holds up to analysis. My guess is that Thomson is a drummer first and a composer second; he plays quite well, and the songs are love slaves to the rhythm. This is future groove music real players can dig. **(www.hermitmusic.com)**

Adam Budofsky

6 Rhythm & Soul Double Album
5 New York City Art Ensemble S/T

Without knowing that the majority of *Rhythm & Soul* was recorded live in Times Square, you'd assume the group was a proficient trio doing live takes in a modest studio. It sounds as if drummer Lock uses a jazz kit with a pint-sized snare and maybe a 16" kick. A cover of Ralph MacDonald's "Mister Magic" (nice to hear) is full of his infectious double strokes. The final four drums & buckets tracks are well played but add nothing to the momentum of the album. That said...

Twenty tracks is a *lot* of drums and buckets. To New York City Art Ensemble's credit, **Ronald Williams** and **James Wilson** (a.k.a. Ayan Falu and Jazzy) vary the pace within a funk context. Also recorded live in Times Square, this disc is a primer on how drummers and percussionists might collaborate in *a* perfect world, no one taking the fore, each holding the intensity. The limited timbres get a little tedious, but judged on its own merits, Williams and Wilson do a solid, clean job of it. **(Outside, PO Box 544, Times Square Station, New York. NY 10108)**

T. Bruce Wittet

BOOKS

8 Mastering The Art Of Brushes by Jon Hazilla

level: intermediate to advanced, $19.95 (with CD)

written by resident taculty members, Berklee Press books oner time-proven, student-tested material. Professor John Hazilla presents a clear, smart, well-diagrammed approach to brush patterns, exercises, and techniques. The emphasis is on swing, from a (deceptively) straight-four ballad pulse to custom patterns borrowed from masters Elvin and Philly Joe. The CD offers concise demonstrations as well as play-along tracks featuring upright bass. There's plenty of technical challenge to keep readers busy. But Hazilla should be applauded for steering students towards the important focus in brush artistry: The many variations of physical patterns are not for technical trickery but for pulling endless shades of sound out of the same rhythmic patterns. (Berklee Press)

Jeff Potter

5 Drumstick Spinology: How To Master Spinning Drumsticks by Steve Stockmal

level: all, $29.95

In Steve Stockmal's 71-page treatise on stick spinning, he first creates a technical language ("false grip one," "A/Y position"), then launches into a hundred spin and flip variations. The book is well stocked with diagrams and photos showing the journey of the hand. But does it work? If you have trouble assembling an Ikea desk, pass on *Drumstick Spinology.* There are valuable spins waiting here, but you could easily grind to a halt on Spin Number 3. As Stockmal cautions, you have to be patient. Frustration may build over an eleven-page cartoon section suggesting fun activities, such as attaching a fishing line to a drumstick. When you see the price, you may want to add another scribble depicting a certain author getting skewered. (PO Box 3025, Santa Barbara, CA 93130-3025)

T. Bruce Wittet

8 Bembe Conversations by Arturo Rodriguez

level: all, $22.95

"Bembe" has many different meanings: a class of percussion instruments, a particular kind of tree, or a type of drum, particularly one with religious or spiritual significance. The inspiration for all bembe drums is taken from their original Yoruba roots in Nigeria. Mr. Rodriguez goes into great detail when describing the origins of bembe, and in turn the roots of percussion and of civilization itself, focusing on West Africa. Included here are photos showing the correct way to sit and strike a drum. Rhythmic patterns are presented in grid form to show the relationship between all the instruments, as in "conversation." There are also song lyrics (also in grid form), and the accompanying CD makes a very thorough and energizing percussion experience. (MelBay)

David Licht

7 Metallica: An Inside Look At The Drum Styles Of Metallica by Gregory Beyer

level: beginner to advanced, $19.95 (with CD)

In this superb analysis of Lars Ulrich's drumming, nineteen Metallica songs—a veritable Greatest Hits—are broken down into sections of verse, chorus, pre-chorus, solo, etc. Analysis and commentary are added throughout, providing excellent insight into why and how Lars chose his parts. The accompanying CD is excellent, with a studio band recreating the featured music. Each drum track is played "solo" at a slower tempo as well. Two minor complaints: First, there are no complete drum charts in the book. And second, the playing on the CD, while clean and accurate, is definitely *not* Lars' or the band's. Still, for the serious Metallica fan, this is a slam-dunk of a drum book. (CherryLane)

Ted Bonar

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MINI TUTORIALS

6 Pocket Practicer by Gary Davis

level: intermediate, $14.95

Taller than it is wide, this slender volume fits easily into any stick bag. That way you can bring it to the gig and practice during breaks. The spiral binding guarantees that it will stay put on your music stand or floor tom. At the top of each page, Davis presents some rudiment or ostinato to keep your hands busy, then poses several bass drum and hi-hat challenges below. His methodology may not be groundbreaking, but the book is well planned and targets often-neglected areas. And it gets tricky! By the time he gets to his sections on beat displacement. Davis will have you scrambling to land the bass drum where it should be. Just heed his suggestion to keep the speed down, and you will walk away from band break with a few new ideas. (www.pocketpiacticei.com)

7 Developing Rock Grooves by Sandy Feldstein

level: beginner, $5.95

7 Developing Rock Drum Fills by Seth Goldberg

level: beginner to intermediate, $5.95

9 Dictionary Of Percussion Terms by Morris Lang & Larry Spivak

level: all, $6.95

Carl Fischer's Hip Pockets Series do literally fit in your hip pocket. Now, next time you're waiting for the train, you can work on, say, your rock grooves. *Developing Rock Grooves* and *Drum Fills* are laid out logically. First, you're mixing up the bass drum, then opening and closing the hats in unfamiliar places, and so on. Or, in *Fills,* you logically start with one-beat fills, move to two-beat fills, etc. There's nothing here you won't find elsewhere in terms of licks; the beauty is the quick progression and convenience. *The Dictionary Of Percussion Terms* is a real gem, a hip compendium of percussion jargon as found in symphonic scores. As musics of the world collide, a book such as this—a bargain at $6.95—is going to come in handy outside the concert hall. (Carl Fischer)

T. Bruce Wittet

Grover Pro Percussion

The Little Big Company

by Rick Van Horn

Professional drumkits are among the newest of Grover's range of percussion instruments.

In 1979 a young percussionist named Neil Grover became frustrated trying to find quality instruments. So he started making some for himself. Other players began asking him to make instruments for them. One day a music dealer in Texas called, saying, "I want to buy a dozen of your triangles." When Neil said, "I'm not really in business," the Texan said, "You are now."

Over the ensuing two decades, Neil pursued his career as a concert percussionist—notably with The Boston Pops—and as a teacher at the University of Massachusetts. At the same time he expanded his manufacturing activities. Eventually, he had a decision to make.

"I went into music at the age of nine because it was creative," Neil says. "I was learning new skills and thinking creatively all the time. After twenty years as a professional, some of that creativity had gone out the window. Plus I was frustrated with the state university system, because of cutbacks. So I decided to focus on the business."

Andy Rega (currently VP of operations) became the first full-time employee of Grover Pro Percussion. Dave Kilkenny (now VP of sales) joined a few years later. Says Neil, "Dave has an MBA, and Andy teaches music business. They bring strengths to the company that I don't have. They enable me to focus on what I like, which is the R&D, the clinics, and expansion of the company."

"Expansion" is the operative word at Grover. What began as a small concert percussion business now also offers concert and combo snare drums, as well as high-quality drumkits. And just three years ago, Grover entered the highly competitive drumstick market by acquiring the manufacturing assets and brand name of the Silver Fox stick company.

"We see ourselves as eventually becoming a full-line manufacturer, like the Ludwig of the '60s and '70s," Neil says. "Of course, when we decided to enter the general drum market, many people thought it was totally nuts. But we had the equipment, the technology, and the suppliers. And we had a profitable percussion business that could finance a small drum-making operation for X number of years. We're not going to compete with offshore companies in the low-end market, nor do we want to be known as a super-high-end custom maker. We are positioning ourselves at the middle/high point, as a quality professional drum company."

Snare Drums

Drum making at Grover began with snare drums. The Projection-Plus is their high-end orchestral snare, while the SV (Sound Value) series is for the school-band and student market. The Performance series is the company's general-purpose, drum-set-style snare. All three drums feature the same shells with different hardware and finishes.

The Projection-Plus series features low-mass tube lugs, Nickel Piston strainers, and Remo Renaissance heads. SV and Performance drums are fitted with classic die-cast lugs, Gladstone-style drop-away throw-offs on 5" and 6" drums (piccolos feature a side-throw design), and coated Ambassador heads.

Projection-Plus drums have extended snares with five-point snare-level adjustments. This permits the snares to be absolutely even across the bottom head, or to be adjusted so as to make the drum more sensitive towards one side. "People sometimes tweak the snares asymmetrically so that they can play on different areas of the drum and get different responses," Neil explains.

Although Grover's three snare-drum series differ in appearance and appointments, they don't differ tremendously in sound capability. "The hardware on our SV line is simpler and more durable," says Neil. "Those drums can be dropped on the floor—which students often do. Yet I'd say their sound is 90% of what the Projection-Plus produces. And the main difference between the SV series and the Performance series is the finish on the drums. Otherwise they're very similar drums that we market for different crowds."

Grover's Projection Plus concert snare drum

Power To The Piccolos

One of Grover's earliest forays into the snare-drum market came with the introduction of the 4x10 Power Piccolo—one of the first "auxiliary" snare drums. How did that come about?

"At the time," Neil replies, "drummers were playing two bass drums, umpteen toms, and scads of cymbals. Why shouldn't they also have variety in their snare sounds? I don't know if we coined the term 'secondary snare drum,' but we were thinking that way, including suspending the drum off the hi-hat or another stand."

Some people feel that such a mounting system restricts the vibration of a drum's shell, reducing its projection. Neil doesn't buy that argument. "I used to do acoustic research," he says. "I know that at high frequencies you don't have a lot of motion of mass. That means there's no significant shell involvement in a piccolo snare. Besides, I'd rather have the positioning versatility that the clamp provides."

The Power Piccolo is designed to mount in convenient places for auxiliary use.

Grover Pro Percussion

Mixing The Old With The New

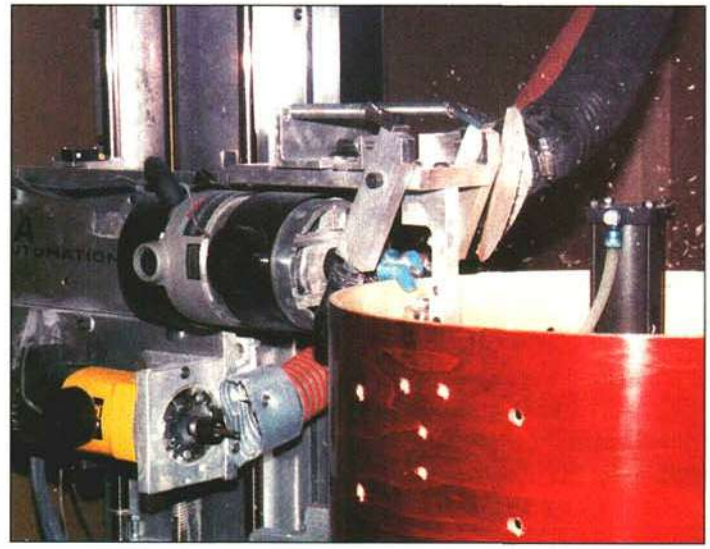
Given Neil's background in "legit" percussion, some people are surprised to learn that his company's first drums were made with composite synthetic shells—the CST series. But in fact Neil began experimenting with synthetic shells many years ago.

"In orchestral playing," says Neil, "a metal snare can often be a little too bright, and a wood drum a bit too warm and mellow. I found that synthetic shells could produce a certain brightness that was in between. We experimented with fiberglass, carbon fiber, and other materials before we settled on the composite we use now. And the drums *look* really cool, because we cover them with some pretty wild wraps. Our theory is that since the drum *sounds* different, it should also *look* different."

Drumkits

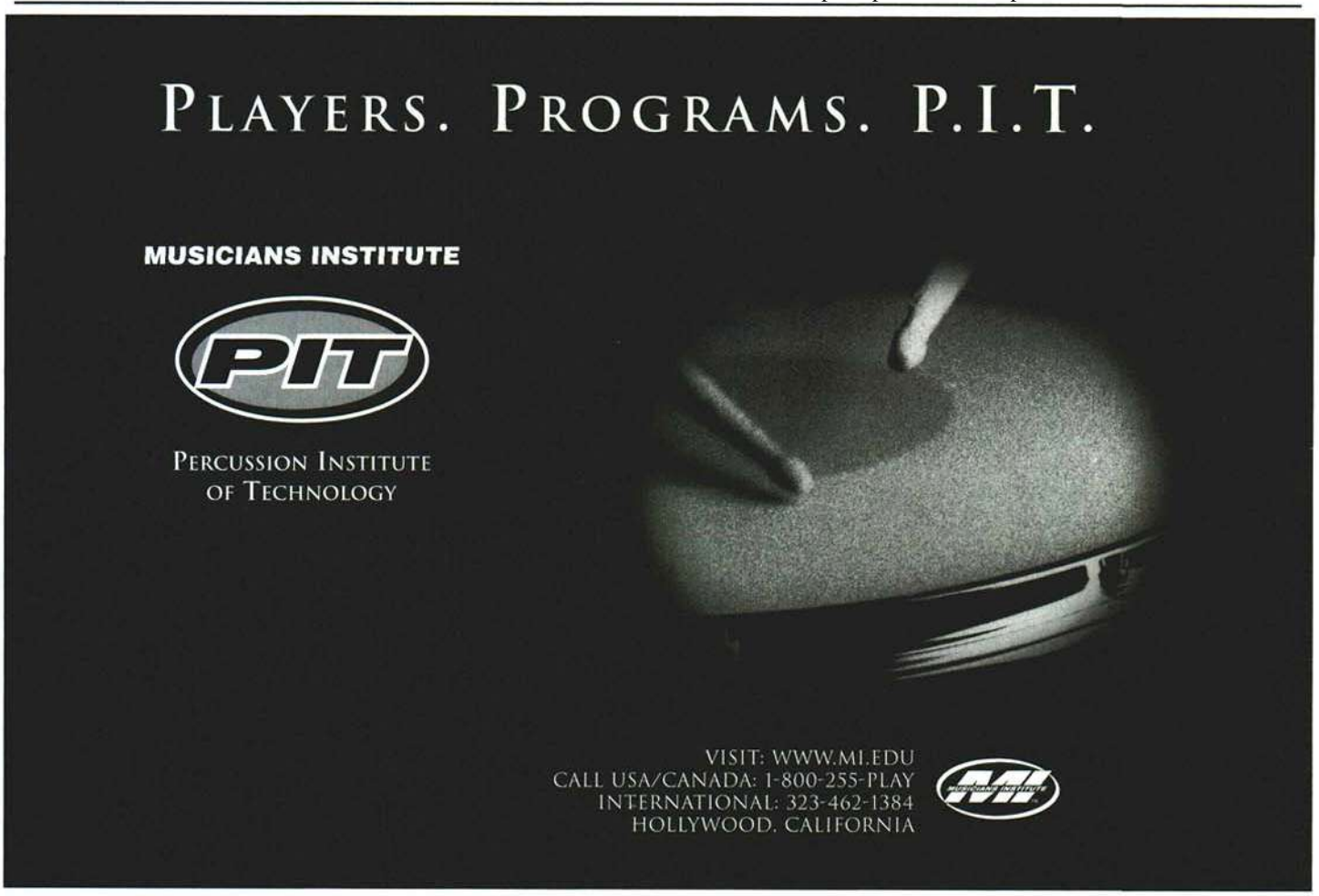
Grover has been making drumkits seriously for a little over three years—a fact that surprises many drummers. "We think we make a very good set, with a good sound and a slightly different look, at a good price," says Neil. "We just are not very visible in the marketplace yet. Our snare drums have done very well for us. And a lot of stores are coming back and asking about full kits. It's something that we can build on in the next couple of years."

Speaking of building, each Grover drum is created individually, on a unique computer-controlled machine. "Our drum-making technology is called DNC—Digital Numeric Control," Neil explains. "Older equipment requires big computers built into the machines, along with special motors. I designed our machine to work off an old 486 PC. If it craps out I have five more upstairs in our office. The motors doing the actual mechanical operations are standard Porter Cable and DeWalt router motors from Home Depot."



A single computer-controlled machine drills all holes and cuts all edges in every Grover drum.

A snare drum may require anywhere from five to ten different-sized holes, depending on its fittings. A typical drilling machine drills holes of one size, then stops for a tool change. Grover's system uses a single 1/16" bit. "When it drills a 1/16" hole," Neil explains, "it just plunges straight in. For larger holes it comes into the shell in a spiral pattern that expands to create whatever size



Computer technology gives way to the skilled eye of a Grover technician when it comes to the trueness of bearing edges.

hole is necessary. This system saves a lot of time and money."

Grover's computer can be programmed to accommodate custom orders. "If we decide to make a drum with big holes in the shell," says Neil, "I just draw a circle into the program, and the machine will cut whatever I draw. If you want a drum without an air vent, I just edit the program, and *voila.* No air vent. If you want the butt plate on your snare 2/10" lower than our regular position, I can do it just by adjusting the software. No measuring, no adjusting the tools, no nothing."

The same machine cuts bearing edges and snare beds with equal precision. Says Neil, "It's important that the snare bed be aligned perfectly with the center of the strainer and the butt plate. If the snares don't run perfectly parallel along the bed, it's a disaster. It's like having wheels out of alignment. Our system gives us the ability to double- and triple-check those relationships. We're very proud of this machine. Very few companies—large or small—have such automated equipment. This is very new technology."

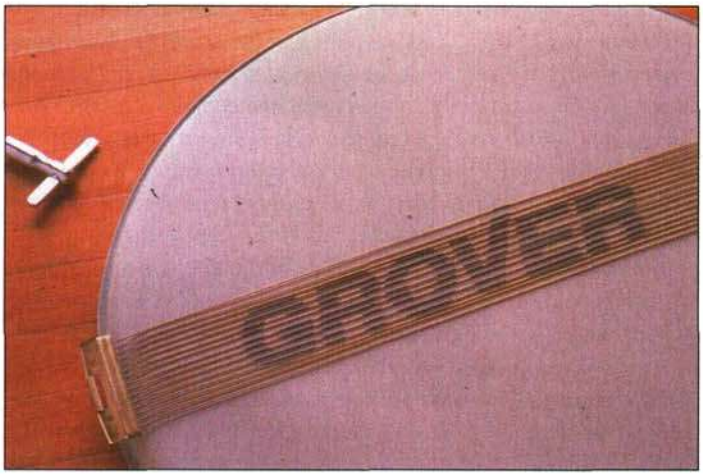
But *old* technology can sometimes still be the best. In the time-tested manner, a skilled Grover technician checks each bearing edge for trueness on a granite slab. Additionally, edges are carefully hand-sanded to make sure the drumheads will seat properly.

Grover treats the inside of their drumshells with a tung oil finish, rather than any sort of sealant. "We don't want to seal the pores," says Neil, "because what gives a wood drum its characteristic warmth is the sound resonating off a porous material, as opposed to a bright, hard, reflective surface."

Exteriors of the drums are finished with a compound that's 50% lacquer and 50% polyurethane. Grover believes that this mixture provides a finish with the best attributes of both materials. Also available are drums with an outer veneer of Italian ligna wood finished in various stains.

Getting Wired

Before Grover made snare drums, they first made snare *wires*—the Performance Snare System series. Neil Grover's eyes light up when the subject of snare wires is raised. "To me," he says, "the two components that really make the greatest change in the sound



Grover Performance Snares

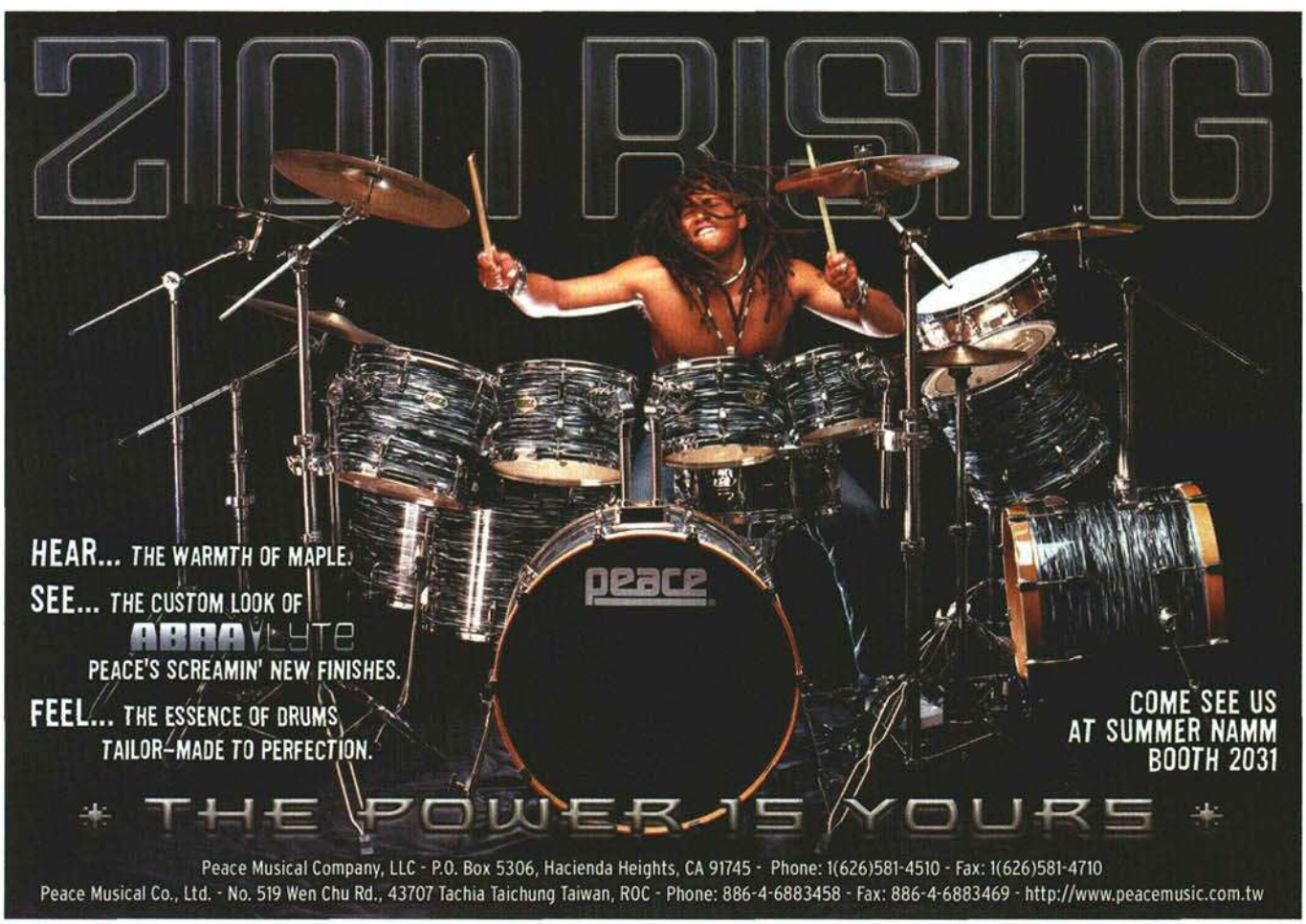
of a snare drum are the snares and the heads. Drum makers fit their drums with lots of different heads. But 98% of the drum makers out there use the same type of spiral-wire snappy snares. With a spiral, the point of contact is at the apex of that spiral, so every strand may have only twenty or thirty tiny points of contact along the head. Even multiplied by twenty snare strands, the total amount of wire touching the bottom head is minimal. Snappy snares always sound 'washy' to me—not focused.

"We make our snares out of guitar strings," Neil continues. "They lay across the head for their whole length, giving them much more contact and a full sound that is unmatched by snappy snares. And the smaller the drum, the more effect the snare has. Our Power Picc sounds bigger than it is because of the surface area of snare touching drumhead."

Neil is quick to point out that Grover Performance snares are not "cable" snares. "What is generically known as a 'cable snare' is a steel wire surrounded by nylon or plastic," he says. It has very little flexibility. As a result, it produces a very dry sound. That sound is popular in symphonic drumming, so we do make some cable snares for that market. Our Performance snares are not as stiff as cable, but stiffer than snappy snares."

Grover offers snares of three different gauges: Jazz (light), Club (medium), and Stadium (heavy). Each of the three weights comes in silver (bright) and bronze (dark) versions. Comments Neil, "Any model will work well on any drum. But if you have a naturally warm-sounding wood drum, you may want to put the brighter snares on it to bring up some of the high end. If you have a metal or other drum that already has a lot of high end, putting bronze snares on will warm it up and boost the low end.

"People wonder why our snares cost so much," Neil says. "The main reason is that there is a *lot* of labor involved in making them. They're fabricated on a jig that is basically a guitar neck. Our technician lays up each string by hand, and then actually tunes each one to the same pitch. Unless we do that, there might be loose wires within the snare set, and they'll buzz. The wires are hand-soldered to the end plates, after which leftover wires are carefully removed with a small grinder. It's a long and delicate process, but we think the results are worth the time and the cost."



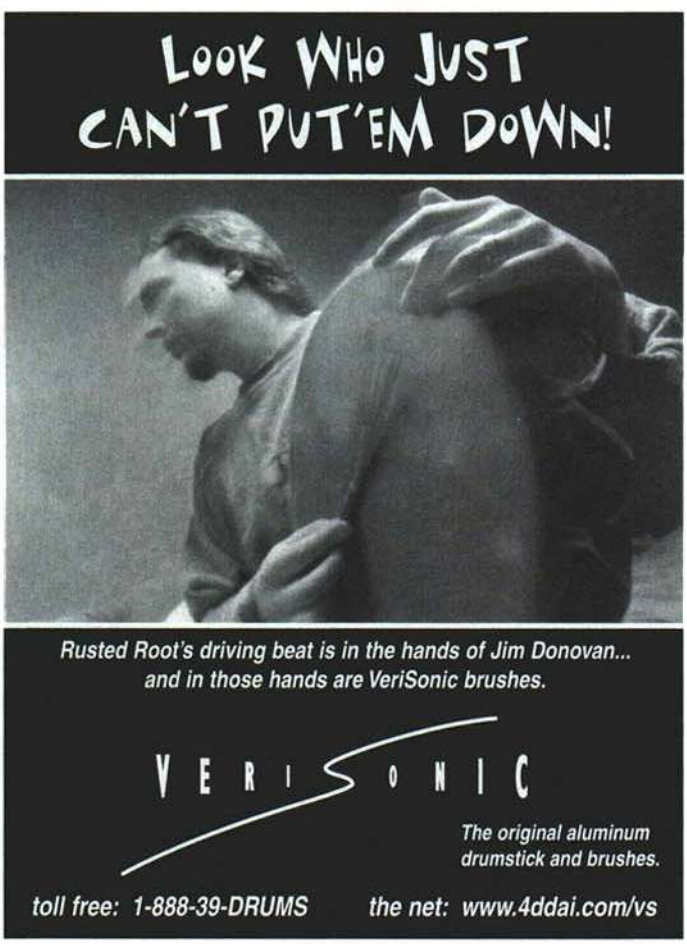
Each set of snares is created by hand, using guitar strings that are individually tuned for precise snare tension.

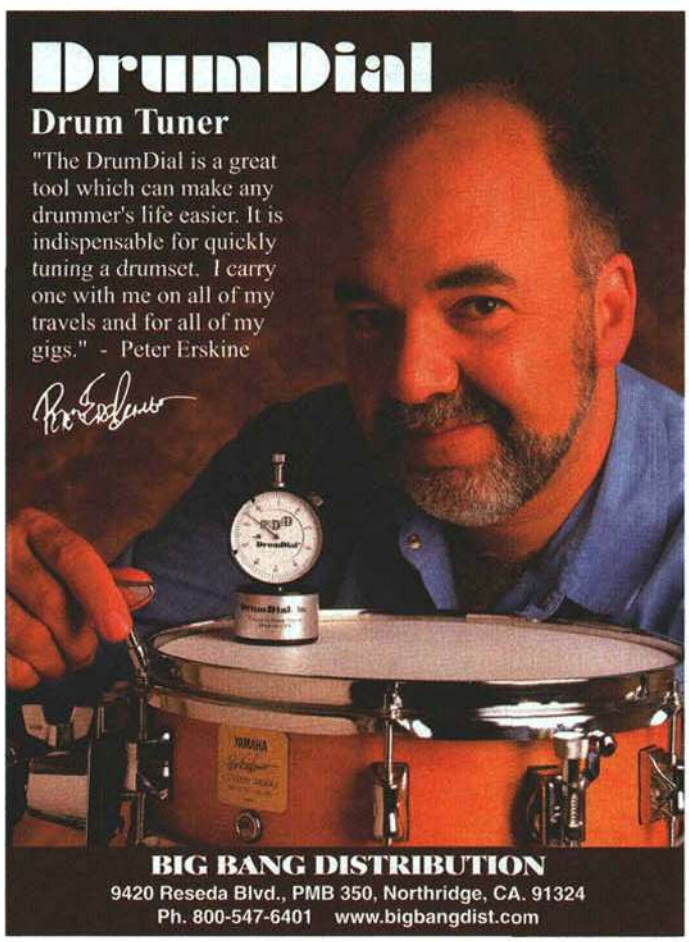
After The Fox

Grover's most recent expansion effort was the acquisition of the Silver Fox Drumstick Company. That company's founder, Al Lemert, made his reputation as a marching percussion specialist for Ludwig drums. (Among other innovations, Al is credited with developing marching quad concert toms.) "When Al left Ludwig," says Neil, "he went to Florida and set up Silver Fox. The brand never was particularly big in the combo market, but Al's reputation—and the quality and unique designs of his sticks—made it *very* successful in the marching field. Al passed away a few years ago, and when the company came up for sale we grabbed it. We would never have considered getting into the stick market from scratch, with all the R&D and tooling that would have been required. But Silver Fox came to us with all the designs and tooling already in place. It was really a dream come true."

Neil's first goal with the Silver Fox stick line is to recapture the share of the marching-percussion market that was lost upon the passing of Al Lemert. "We've already made some strides," says Neil. "We had a presence at Winter Guard International, Drum Corps International, and two or three of the regional shows last year. I think we have some special things to offer, including more models than any other manufacturer of marching sticks. We have over eleven separate designs, and each of those is available with three different tip materials. The corps appreciate that variety."

At the same time, Grover is developing their combo stick line. "We have 5A, 7A, Jazz, and other standard models," says Neil. "But we also have some interesting sticks with profiles that are a





little different from what anyone else offers. Some have a back taper at the butt end that moves the center of balance up a little more forward. You get a small, fairly light stick that has a little more power on the downstroke. We're developing most of our sticks in hickory, but we will offer some maple models as well."

Key to the variety of Silver Fox sticks is their tip options. In addition to familiar wood and nylon tips, the line also offers tips made of a hard plastic material called *Delrin.* Some of these are familiar in shape. But the combo series offers extremely low-mass, ball-shaped tips called Staccato Tips, while the marching series features mushroom-shaped tips called Ultra Tips. Each of these special tips is claimed to offer added articulation and greater tip-rebound speed.

Silver Fox sticks are created on a back-knife lathe, pretty much the way most sticks are made. But they undergo a finishing process that's very different. Each stick is hand-sanded, then hand-sprayed with an acrylic that is specially formulated strictly for use by Grover. Pairs of sticks are computer-matched by pitch and weight. After

Unique to Silver Fox are stick tips made of *Delrin,* including the Ultra Tip (for marching) and Staccato Tip (for drumkit) models at right.

Every Silver Fox stick is hand-finished, including being sprayed with a special acrylic formula.

THE CONCERT STAGE

Grover's business began with concert percussion instruments, and they are still a leader in that field. Here's a quick rundown on some of the key products in the Grover line.

Tambourines

To many drummers, a tambourine is a headless plastic frame full of metal disks designed to be whacked by a lead singer against his thigh, or perhaps clamped to a cymbal stand and struck with a stick. But Grover tambourines are traditional instruments designed to perform in orchestral situations. The professional-level Projection-Plus tambourine features a steam-bent one-piece wood shell (in the style of the old Radio King snare drums). The SV student line features ply shells. Both series are fitted with skin heads.

"Most manufacturers don't use skin heads anymore," says Neil Grover. "It's very difficult to source them. But when you're playing a concert tambourine, you have to do a thumb roll quite often. A skin head gives you just the right feel and response for that. Also, you can't get the same dynamic response from the jingles with a plastic head."

The jingle slots in Grover tambourines are of two different widths. "When you play a tambourine," explains Neil, "you don't want an open roll. You don't want to hear that articulation. You want a smooth, lush sound created by the jingles oscillating back and forth. If you have two different-size slots, the jingles will oscillate out of phase with each other, producing that smoothness."

Each jingle in a Grover tambourine is hand-hammered, giving it its own unique sound. Says Neil, "A good choir has a big, beautiful sound because of the small variations between the voices. They're singing the same parts, but they don't sound exactly the same. If we stamped out each jingle mechanically, every jingle would sound the same. We wouldn't get that full, lush 'choir' sound."

Projection-Plus concert tambourines feature solid wood shells and natural skin heads.

Triangles

Grover's professional Super-Overtone triangles are made out of a high-carbon tool steel, and are based on an old Leedy triangle that Neil played when he first started subbing with The Boston Symphony. "It just sparkled," says Neil, "and I could never find another one like it. So one day I took it to the acoustics lab at MIT. They spent hours explaining what made that triangle so sparkly. I

that they're hot-stamped with the Silver Fox logo, followed by a second finishing step that's currently a company secret.

Neil Grover acknowledges that the "new" Silver Fox operation isn't going to become a major manufacturer right away. "We couldn't handle the production anyway, what with having only one lathe," he says. "But we *can* make a high-end stick to supply people who are looking for something different.

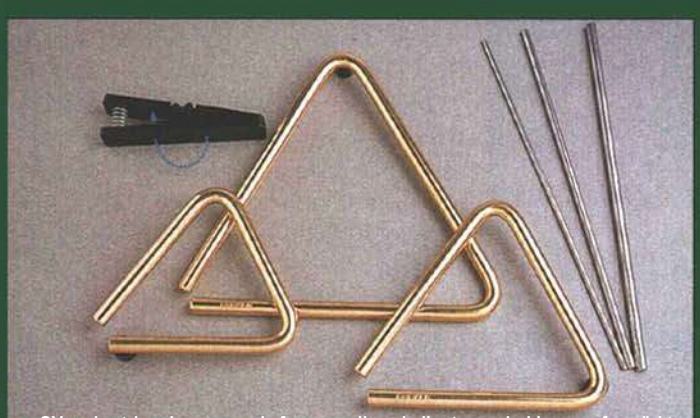
"We're looking to capture one or two percent of the drumstick market," Neil concludes. We think that's a realistic goal. We're doing a lot of promotion on our Web site, we've been running a little ad in *MD,* and we just released our first catalog a few months ago. It's an exciting time for us."

(From Left):Andy Reed, Neil Grover, and Dave Kilkenny are the guiding forces of Grover Pro Percussion..

duplicated that as closely as I could."

Years later Neil wanted to create a triangle with a lighter sound profile, with more high overtones and fewer lows. Experimentation with different alloys led to one similar to cymbal bronze. The finished triangle not only sounded great, but was also lower in cost. "By price point alone we put it in the SV line to fill out that niche," says Neil. "But it's totally professional in quality. There are three sizes, and people use them for all kinds of things because they really have a pretty sound."

Grover also offers a wide range of triangle beaters, mounts, clips, and bags.



SV series triangles are made from an alloy similar to cymbal bronze, for a light, delicate sound profile.

Mallets

In addition to Silver Fox drumsticks, Grover offers a full line of Artist's Choice percussion mallets. Among these are Rick Holmes timpani mallets, named for a noted timpanist from St. Louis. His design features removable heads. Says Neil Grover, "The advantage of the screw-on head is that it's replaceable. When the head wears out you take it off and we send you a new set."

Grover makes six models of timpani mallets with maple handles, and five with bamboo handles. "In the past couple of years timpani players have gone to a much lighter style of playing," he explains. "I originally learned the Saul Goodman approach, using maple sticks and going for a big, romantic sound. Now everything has gone classical—European style—and they want lighter mallets for playing off the heads. Bamboo mallets are great for that."

Grover's line also includes mallets for concert drums, chimes, gongs, and keyboard percussion instruments. A wide variety of solid and yarn-wound models is available.

Grover's mallet selection includes these Rick Holmes Artist's Choice models with replaceable heads.

Derek Sherinian

The Keys To Great Drumming

by Mike Haid

There's nothing subtle about keyboard virtuoso Derek Sherinian. He carries himself with a confident demeanor usually held for the most flamboyant of rock stars. Not satisfied to wear the makeup of a sideman (ironically, he has worked with two of the most recognized masked marvels in rock history, KISS and Alice Cooper), Sherinian stepped out of the shadows of major rock act sideman and into the limelight as a solo artist. Although he has worked with these big-time acts, his claim to fame as a player came from his four years as keyboardist with prog masters Dream Theater and recently with his outlandish fusion group Planet X.

Sherinian, a California native, resides in the Hollywood Hills, where he owns and operates his state-of-the-art recording studio, Leopard Room. It's here that he recently recorded and co-produced his second instrumental rock/fusion solo release, *Inertia,* alongside drum legend Simon Phillips.

Sherinian began playing piano at the age of five. He started off playing classical, and then got into pop music. It wasn't long before he became interested in progressive music. In his junior year of high school he received a scholarship to Berklee College of Music, which he attended for three years. While there he was able to jam with musicians like drummer Will Calhoun (ex-Living Colour) and guitarist Al Pitrelli (Megadeth), who would eventually recommend him to Alice Cooper.

"As Virgil was playing, Simon was in the control room, just shaking his head at the incredible stuff Virgil was laying down."

Derek also performed with drummer Mike Shapiro at Berklee. Shapiro is a recognized Latin expert who has been a member of Airto's band. "Mike and I both went to

Berklee during 1983 and '84, and he was the only one in our group of players who could really play well," Sherinian says. "He has an amazing groove and is totally slamming at the Latin/Brazilian feel. Mike ended up in one of my bands, and to this day he's one of my dearest friends." After Berklee, Derek moved to Hollywood and worked at various jobs to stay afloat. "The worst thing in the world is living in LA with big dreams and no money," he says.

Early in Derek's career, he was hired by drummer Buddy Miles, of Jimi Hendrix's Band Of Gypsys fame. "Buddy was my first semi-pro gig, Sherinian says. "I joined The Buddy Miles Express in 1988 for a national 'Chitlin' Circuit' tour. This was where I learned about the groove and about playing with soul. This was the first time I traveled the country on a tour bus and played more than four nights a week. *That's* how you learn your craft. Buddy used to call me 'Mortimer' for some reason. He'd say to me, 'Mortimer, you gotta listen to the train to find the groove...chugga, chugga, chugga.'

"Buddy has the greasiest, most natural groove out of all the cats I've played with," Derek insists. "He had the voice of an angel *and* played drums with the fattest groove in the world."

Derek got his first big break in 1989 touring with Alice Cooper in support of his platinum album *Trash.* From 1989 to 1998, Derek played two hundred fifty shows and recorded two albums with Cooper. "I found out that my Berklee college friend Al Pitrelli had been hired as Alice Cooper's musical director," recalls Sherinian. "Of course, he recommended me for the keyboardist slot!

"Before I went into the audition," Derek continues, "Al gave me some good advice: Go in, smile, shake hands, and then *shut up.* Let your playing do the talking. That was the most valuable piece of advice anyone has ever given me."

Joining Alice Cooper's band is where Sherinian met drummer Jonathan Mover. "When Alice was assembling the *Trash* band, he had every position filled but the drum spot," Sherinian says. "Jonathan didn't have a resume at the time, but he just so happened to be on the cover of *Modern Drummer* that month. So he sent that to Alice instead! He's my hero for that alone! But Jonathan opened my eyes to a lot of things in the business. He's a master drummer who can do it all, and he's constantly working in New York City because of it."

Sherinian's Hit List

Simon Phillips

Virgil Donati

Mike Portnoy

Rod Morgenstein

WillCalhoun

Eric Singer

Jimmy DeGrasso

Jonathan Mover

Buddy Miles

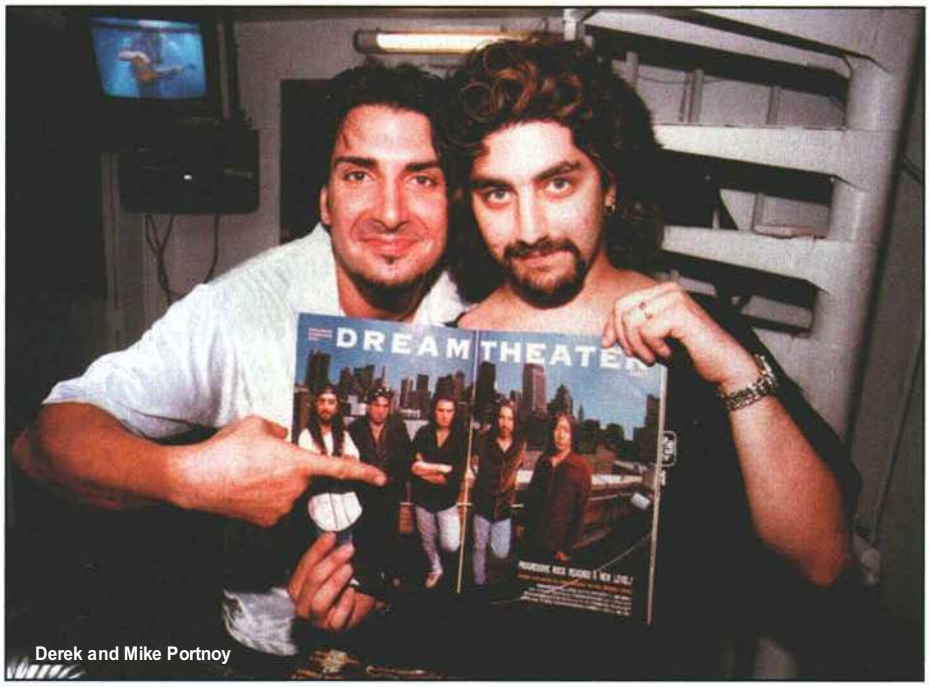
Mover was eventually replaced by drummer Eric Singer. Other drummers that would tour with Alice during Sherinian's time in the band were Winston Watson and Jimmy DeGrasso. "I first met Jimmy in 1987," Derek recalls, "when he was in Y&T and I was with Alice. Jimmy is a solid rock drummer with fusion chops. He has done well in his career because he can go into any rock gig and blend with the environment." But, after doing a second tour and album with Alice, it would be Eric Singer who Sherinian would soon be reunited with in another monster rock band.

"In August 1992, I was visiting Al Pitrelli in New York," Sherinian recalls. "When I called my answering machine back home, I was surprised at what I heard. 'Derek, this is Gene Simmons of KISS. We need a keyboard player *now.'* I contacted Eric Singer immediately to find out what the deal was. It turned out that he had recommended me.

"As for Eric's drumming, he hits harder than anyone I've played with," Derek says. "He's one of the best hard rock drummers in the world. We've been friends since he joined Alice Cooper in 1990, but Eric has gone on to play with most of the great metal bands of our time. And now he gets to dress up like a cat and go forty feet in the air! [Singer has replaced Peter Criss on the current KISS tour.] Very few drummers have a resume as strong as Eric Singer's."

In September 1994, Derek was hired by progressive rock supergroup Dream Theater for a world tour in support of their album *Awake.* Six months into the tour, he was asked to join the band as a full-time member. But after three releases and two world tours, Derek and Dream Theater parted ways. "When I first became aware that Dream Theater needed a keyboardist," he says, "I had made the decision to switch to guitar and was about

Derek and Virgil Donati warm up backstage before their performance at Modern Drummer Festival 2001.



Derek and Mike Portnoy

to take over as rhythm guitarist in Alice's band. Unfortunately, the tour was canceled and I ended up being out of work. Jonathan Mover gave me a call and told me about the opening in Dream Theater.

"When I heard their songs, I felt pure fear," Sherinian admits. "It was the first time I ever had a doubt about whether or not I could cut a gig. Two weeks later, I flew to New York for the audition. We played 'Caught In A Web,' 'Pull Me Under,' and 'Voices.' I walked out of the audition feeling that it could go either way. Fortunately, it went the right way, and the rest is history!

"Mike Portnoy is the heart and soul of Dream Theater," Derek continues. "He is very passionate about his band, and I respect that tremendously. We used to have a lot of fun playing live together. Mike writes very creative beats and has excellent limb independence. The most impressive thing about Mike's drumming to me is that he has totally blown the 'he's just a drummer' stereotype right out of the water. He's a main creative force in that band, and he actually figures out a way to play whatever he wants in the context of the music, and gets worldwide recognition for it."

After his four-year stint with Dream Theater, Derek released his first solo album, *Planet X,* the result of a collaboration with Australian drum phenom Virgil Donati. "Virgil will go down as one of the greats," Sherinian states. "His talent is unlike anything I have ever seen before. I knew after the first time that I jammed with him that I had to start a sick prog band around him. Virgil and I formed

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Planet X in 1999.

"The puzzling thing about Virgil," Sherinian continues, "is distinguishing how much of his greatness is 'the gift' and how much of it comes from unrelenting discipline. Virgil is the most innovative, and has the most chops, out of all the drummers that I've mentioned. He also has the strongest melodic sense. Virgil writes a majority of the Planet X music. I've never heard a drummer who has more harmonic sense than Virgil, ever. Planet X is currently in the studio, and Virgil cut his drum tracks in Simon Phillips' studio. As Virgil was playing, Simon was in the control room, smiling ear to ear and just shaking his head at the incredible stuff Virgil was laying down."

Platypus is another prog-rock project Sherinian has been involved with. "Platypus was Dream Theater bassist John Myung's idea," Derek explains. "He asked me to get involved, and then he brought in King's X vocalist/guitarist Ty Tabor. John brought up Rod Morgenstein's name, and we decided to ask him to join. I've been a fan of Rod's since I was fourteen years old. He is one of my favorite musicians. He can play all styles, and when he plays he reminds me of Animal from *The Muppets*. Rod has a strong melodic sense, and he writes very creative drum parts. He's a very nice guy, too—always smiling."

The most recent highlight of Sherinian's career has been co-producing his current solo release with drumming legend Simon Phillips. "Simon is one of my all-time-favorite musicians," Derek says. "He can play any style with complete authority while at the same time maintaining his identity. His tone is beautiful, and he grooves in any time signature.

"Because Simon is an engineer/producer/mixer/studio owner," Sherinian continues, "he knows how to get the optimum sound out of his drums. He's also a great collaborative writing partner. Working with him on my new CD, *Inertia,* has been my proudest career achievement."

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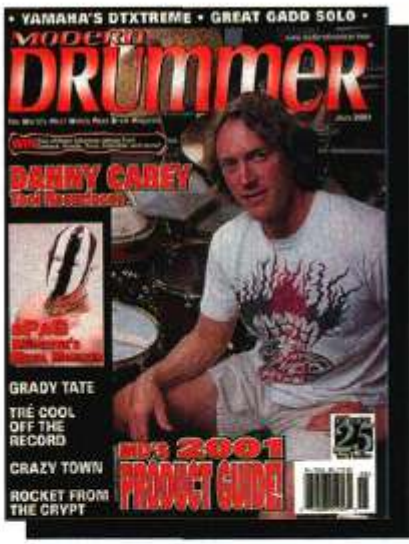

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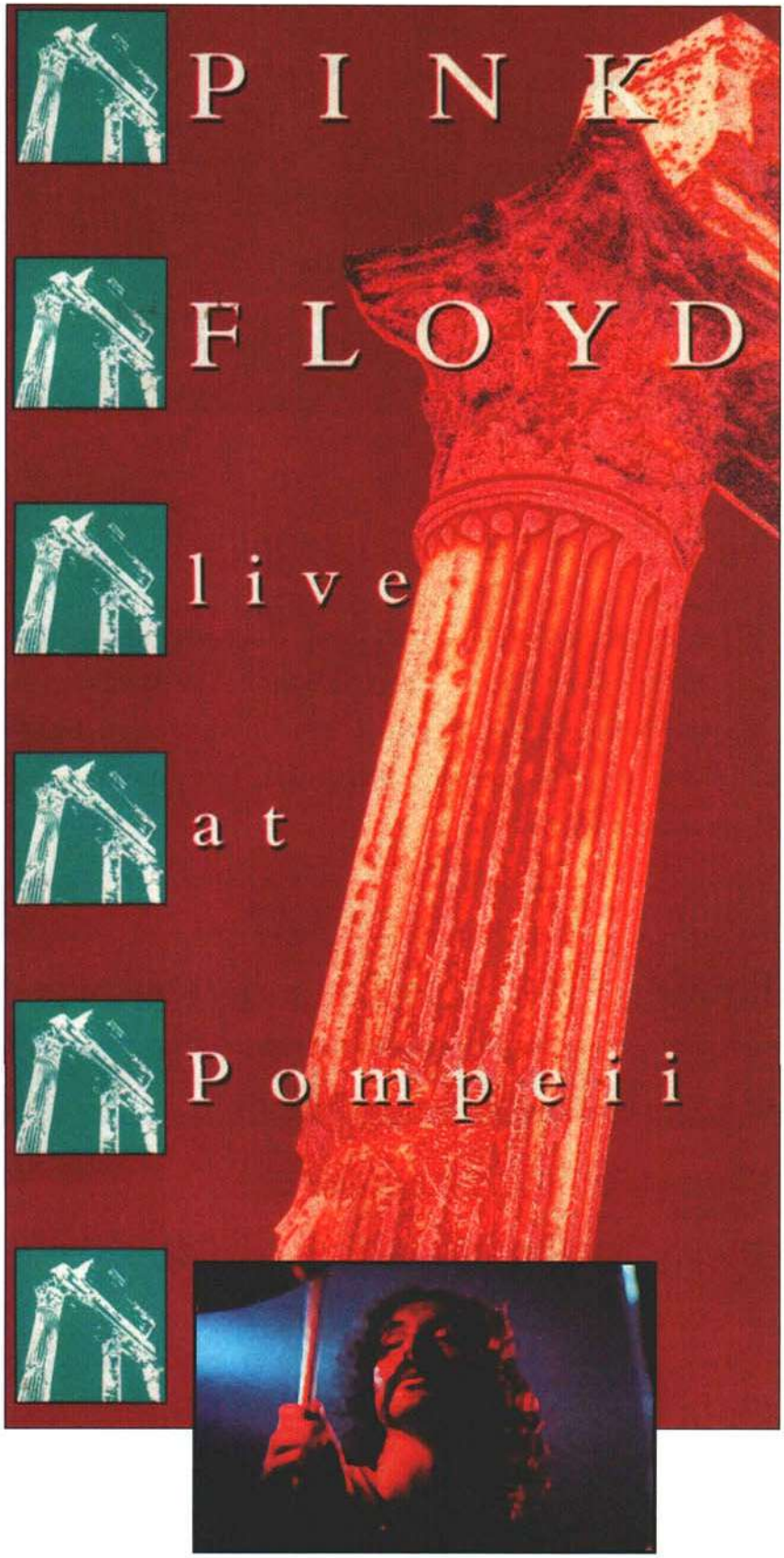

Pink Floyd Live At Pompeii

Nick Mason (dr), David Gilmour (gtr, vcl), Richard Wright (kybd, vcl), Roger Waters (bs, vcl)

Echoes • Careful With That Axe Eugene • A Saucerful Of Secrets • One Of These Days (I'm Going To Cut You Into Little Pieces) • Set The Controls For The Heart Of The Sun • Mademoiselle Nobs

Simpleminded technique snobs have pooh-pooh'd Pink Floyd for years. They miss the point. Even at their lengthiest, Floyd avoided "...and NOW it's time for the *solo...*" crudeness. Mood was the master. And truth be told, the Floyd were no slouches on their instruments—nor were they humorless navel-gazers. *Live At Pompeii* goes far to make both these points clear.

Pompeii was filmed in 1972, at a crucial point in Pink Floyd's career. The previous year's *Meddle* album was a major stylistic move forward. Earlier in 72 their soundtrack to the film *The Valley* resulted in their first top-50 American album, *Obscured By Clouds.* And they were already premiering the groundbreaking *Dark Side Of The Moon* in concert.

In fact, between the live performances here, we're treated to shots of the band constructing *Dark Side* at Abbey Road Studios. Though brief, these glimpses into the creation of one of the most influential albums in history are fascinating. Watching David Gilmour overdub solos on "Eclipse" is alone priceless.

So, what of Mr. Mason? Lacking the speed of Carl Palmer, the advanced concepts of Bill Bruford, and the mind-bending dexterity of Phil Collins, Mason gets left out of many drumly discussions. Well, God bless those other guys, but honestly, can you imagine what a mess they would have made of Floyd classics like "Money," "Wish You Were Here," or "Comfortably Numb"? There just wasn't room for such cleverness on your average Floyd track.

As Soft Machine drummer Robert Wyatt has accurately suggested, Mason's job was to smoothly navigate the Floydian space shuttle through uncharted cosmic territory—not send up exploding flares every four bars, harshing the passengers' buzz. That's not to say Mason didn't rock out. Check out Nick's linear-type groove on "A Saucerful Of Secrets"—way cool, maybe even ahead of its time. The middle section of "Echoes" grooves like no one's business. And "One Of These Days" (featuring Nick's only known "vocal") romps with an evilness appropriate to the part of its title in parentheses.

Film fans will especially dig *Pompeii.* The live performances were staged in an empty amphitheater, and the directing style is very early-'70s-foreign-filmish: slow pans, long close-ups, great use of light and shade. If you didn't know better, you'd think Mason himself directed. Rarely has a drummer enjoyed such concentrated coverage. And if you look *real* close, you can even see the muffling tape on Nick's toms flapping with every fill.

Oh, the simple pleasures. (Polygram/Universal)

Adam Budofsky

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Believe In Yourself

by Maureen Brown Gratton

As we run in this race we call *human,* we sometimes come up against drawbacks or hurdles. Or so it may seem. It all depends on the way you look at things. Is the glass half-empty, or half-full? I'm a firm believer that whatever idea or notion we have in our heads will manifest itself into our own reality. We have control over our own destiny. It's time to stop blaming everyone—our parents, our teachers, the church, the government—for our self-imposed problems. It's time to take responsibility for our own actions.

Be Careful What You Wish For

Here is an example from my life. When I was about twelve years old, I told my girlfriends that I wanted to be a drummer when I grew up, and I wanted to play a pink drumset. Playing pink drums would help to eliminate the stereotypical idea that playing drums was a masculine thing, not something girls did.

When I went on the bandstand that night I was continually second-guessing myself, thinking my timing was off. I basically had my confidence shot right out the window.

Many years passed, and true to my heart's calling I ended up becoming a professional drummer. I had long forgotten what I had told my girlfriends, and many years had come between us. But I recently chanced to meet with one of these friends, who came out to see me perform. She reminded me of what I had said so long ago. The funny thing is, on the night she saw me perform I was playing a pink drumset. As a matter of fact, I now own *three* pink drumsets. This wasn't something I had set out consciously to do, as I had forgotten all about my childhood resolution. But the seed had been planted. Our desires may not manifest themselves right away. Some things take time. But if you desire something long and hard enough, it will become reality.

Give Credit Where It's Due

How about making a bad situation good? I was on the road once with a band I had played with for a while. On this trip they had brought along a new bass player. It was a two-week gig, and for about a week and a half, the bass player wouldn't say as much as hello to me. I couldn't figure out what the problem was. Worse, it always felt like I was playing catch-up to his grooves. As soon as I locked on a feel that he had established, he'd change it! The groove would never sit in the pocket. He just wouldn't *allow* it to.

Near the end of the two weeks, the bassist asked me to go for dinner with him, saying that he wanted to discuss some things with me. I was eager to find out what was going on, so I joined him. For the next hour or so he proceeded to tell me that my timing sucked, that I didn't have a clue as to what to play with this band, and that I didn't know the music idiom. (Keep in mind that I had been with the band for a couple of months, while this was his first time playing with them.)

I was completely floored, to say the least. When I went on the bandstand that night, I was continually second-guessing myself, thinking my timing was off. I basically had my confidence shot right out the window.

Fortunately, some local musician friends came to my gig that evening. When I told them what the bassist had said, they were completely shocked. They told me that there were musicians who had come out to see me all week because they thought my timing and playing were incredible! Their perspective was completely different from the bassist's.

In a situation like that, who do you believe? Believe in yourself. *You* know if you need more work in a certain area. You should also be able to sense if someone *else* has a confidence problem and is trying to inflict that problem on you. Don't listen

to them. If you can remain positive when people dump on you, then *that* is your reality.

You Have The Power

If you lack confidence in your playing and in yourself as a person, how can you expect anyone else to feel great about your drumming? Do you believe that you don't deserve to get that great gig? If that's what you truly believe, then that's what will happen. If you *believe* you are not worthy of an opportunity, you won't get it. It's as simple as that.

Why not change your outlook right now? Start really *believing* in yourself. This includes *thoughts, words,* and *actions,* with the emphasis on thoughts. You can talk all you want, but if you don't really believe what you're saying, it just isn't gonna work. You cannot fool the universe. You cannot fool yourself.

Surround yourself with positive people who care—people who can show you a thing or two, and to whom you can offer something in return. Time is too valuable to waste on people who want to hold you back or put you down. Remember, you can accomplish *anything* you put your mind to. You *can* change the world, if you only believe.

Maureen Brown Gratton is a veteran drummer, singer, bandleader, and clinician. She lives in the Toronto, Canada area with her husband, drummer/author/clinician Rick Gratton.

Have a story to tell?

MD's First Person department welcomes articles that focus on personal experiences—positive or negative—in the belief that everyone can learn from the triumphs or tragedies of others. Submissions can be humorous, contemplative, or inspirational. Please limit your article to 1,500 words or less, typewritten or computer-printed, and double-spaced. Send it to: First Person, Modern Drummer Publications, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009.

Metal Meltdown 2001

by Jeff Perlah

Modern Drummer got an earful of extreme music at the third annual Metal Meltdown, held April 6 and 7 at the Asbury Park Convention Center on the boardwalk in Asbury Park, New Jersey. This once-popular beach haven is now run-down and boarded up. But the folks who arrived for the two-day marathon weren't there for suntans and Italian ices. They were there to witness as many outrageous bands as their eardrums would allow.

At Metal Meltdown you'll find plenty of diabolical lyrics, demented band names (like Dying Fetus, Gorgasm, and Anal Blast), and ubiquitous Cookie Monster-style vocals. But even more striking is the dynamic music—created, in part, through devastating drumming—that permeates the extreme metal and hardcore underground.

The 125 acts that performed represent a broad cross-section of today's extreme music scene. Blaring from three stages (often simultaneously) was thrash, speed, black, goth, swamp, epic, and doom/stoner metal; hardcore, grindcore, and noise-core; and various hybridizations of all these styles. Headliners included British doom-metal heavies Cathedral (performing

Clockwise from top left: British doom-metallers Cathedral, who made their first US appearance in five years, headlining Metal Meltdown III; Brian Schleper of Chaos Theory; Deceased's King Fowley.

their first US show in five years) and innovative Scandinavian metallists Amorphis and Opeth. But many of the highlights came well before the headliners took the stage.

With their goth and industrial leanings, Bjork-ish crooning, and minimalistic drumming, Tapping The Vein seemed out of place. But even the most rabid hardcore fanatics grew intrigued with their set on the Digitalmetal.com stage. Even so, many of those fanatics were waiting for Murder, whose drummer displayed a crisp, no-nonsense approach, but whose singer went overboard—waving a baseball bat and ripping his own underwear off.

Kevin Talley of Dying Fetus
Valerie Miller

Drummer Corey Pierce (far right) appeared with hardcore/metal band God Forbid.

Then came a blistering set by British hardcore/thrash sensation Stampin' Ground, whose razor-sharp guitar riffs meshed magnificently with the drumming of Adrian Stokes. Following the performance Stokes said, "I wanna keep the backbone of the playing very hardcore—so it builds with the riff and keeps it all very solid—but bring in thrash-metal elements like the double bass and fills to make it more exciting."

Equally powerful was Diecast, whose raging hardcore/metal was propelled by the surgically precise drumming of Jason Costa. "He's phenomenal. He plays a lot of really wild time patterns," commented drummer Corey Pierce, whose hardcore/metal band, God Forbid, was in fine form on the same stage. Pierce himself displayed visceral yet graceful chops. "I want to accentuate the music, not just hold it down," said the drummer, who has written some of the band's material. The Digitalmetal.com stage also presented formidable sets by the multi-faceted Shadows Fall and Chaos Theory, the raging All Out War and Haste, and the humorously hideous Berzerker.

Countering these pulverizing hardcore-ists was a wellspring of death and thrash metal, grindcore, and noisecore acts on a stage organized by prominent indie label Relapse Records. King Fowley, drummer/vocalist for death-metalists Deceased, whipped the crowd into a frothing frenzy with his unmistakable charisma as the band ripped through their set (including covers of DRI and Kreator). Commenting later about singing and drumming simultaneously, King said, "It can be really challenging when you're trying to sing a vocal pattern while going in a different direction with your drum pattern. It can throw you off. But I bust my balls do it right."

Also on the Relapse stage was Kalibas, whose scorching, shrieking grindcore benefited immensely from their drummer's ever-changing meters and clanging cymbals. Japanese death metal/noisecore specialists Defiled delivered chaotic arrangements that inspired a massive, splattery chop infestation from drummer Naoki Akamatsu. Later, death metal powerhouse Divine Rapture created a solar storm of sound as their headphone-wearing drummer unleashed whirlwind tempos while bashing a "cymbal" that was actually a circular-saw blade.

Later came death metallists Head Trauma, whose vocalist roared, "Sorry, my throat is killing me," although he probably would have sounded the same *without* the sore throat. Meanwhile their eighteen-year-old drummer, Greg Atria, locked expertly with their 5-string bassist—occasionally revealing some funk influence. "I throw it in with the metal when we want to groove a bit," Atria said after the set. Other memorable performances came from Burnt By The Sun—featuring the wildly inventive Dave Witte on drums—and Dim Mak.

Many Meltdown fans couldn't wait to plop down in the plush theater housing the Snake Net Metal Radio stage. There, the brooding gothic architecture gelled perfectly with the sinister vibe exuded by many of the groups, including Impaler, whose freakish make-up and chained mascots had the crowd going berserk. By nightfall, the theater was packed for epic/classic metal bands like Primal Fear and Vintersorg, and for Pain, the intriguing goth/metal/electronic project led by vocalist Peter Tagtgren. As Pain unfurled their emotive music, drummer Horgh (also of black metallists Immortal) pounded mechanistic, trigger-enhanced beats. Eventually, the group belted out a disco-y version of the Beatles' "Eleanor Rigby." Nice.

A Scandinavian invasion began when Opeth was introduced. This was the Swedish metal group's second US performance, the first being at last year's Milwaukee Metalfest. The group's set included sprawling, multi-dimensional pieces from their newest album, *Blackwater Park* (Koch), 1997's *Still Life,* and other releases. Even though drummer Martin Lopez was hidden behind a thick cloud part of the time (thanks to a faulty dry ice machine), he still grabbed everyone's attention with his complex patterns and shifting meters.

As the witching hour began (around 1:00 A.M.), Finland's Amorphis hit the stage. Perched in the theater's plush balcony, I witnessed this extremely creative band's weighty sonic canvases—music that's tough to categorize. Drummer Pekka Kasari was in fine form, with a style that's artful yet never overblown. Earlier in the evening he told me, "I try to play quite easily, not so many fills all the time. I try to listen to the whole band first and then try to make my drumming fit."

Metal Meltdown offered an amazing array of extreme music—and extreme drumming. I left the Convention Center with my ears ringing, but also with a massive smile. In the scheme of things, two days wasn't long enough!

Michigan Band Director Honored With Unique Drum

Professor H. Robert Reynolds recently retired as director of bands at the University of Michigan, after twenty-six years in the position. In celebration of this event, the university's School of Music wanted to present him with a musical memento of their esteem.

That memento was a 1954 WFL 12x15 Super Classic parade drum, which had actually been used by the Michigan band in 1954 while Professor Reynolds was a *member* of the band (albeit on clarinet). Originally covered in gold-sparkle pearl, the drum was completely refinished by Steve Badalament, president of Innovation Drum Company and the Renovation Drum Company, both located in Southfield, Michigan.

The drum now features a blue/black marble mirra lacquer finish, with every metal fitting plated in show-quality 24-carat gold. Professor Reynolds' name is engraved twice on each hoop, on the original WFL drumkey, and on a personalized medallion that also includes an engraved message from the School of Music. The official seal of the University of Michigan Bands is airbrushed onto the shell, while a brass plate affixed to the shell carries the seal of the university itself. Inside the shell are personalized labels with serial numbers, special messages, and Professor Reynolds' photo.

From left: Charlotte Owen, professor Michael Udow and professor H. Robert Reynolds of the University of Michigan, and Innovation Drums' Stephen Badalament

Steve Badalament worked on the drum for two years. At the presentation ceremony, Steve commented that he felt honored to be a part of the project recognizing Professor Reynolds. "Usually, a person in this position receives a gold watch," said Steve. "I think it's very telling that professor Reynolds' years of selfless service to the University of Michigan are represented by a drum."

QUICK BEATS

DENNIS DIKEN
(THE SMITHEREENS)

What are some of your favorite grooves?
Ringo Starr on "It Won't Be Long" (The Beatlesl, Hal Blaine on "I Saw Her Again" (The Mamas & The Papas), Gary Chester on "Twist & Shout" (The Isley Brothers), Roger Hawkins on "The House That Jack Built" (Aretha Franklin), Earl Palmer on "Long Tall Sally" (Little Richard), Keith Moon on "Armenia, City In The Sky" (The Who), Kenny Jones on "All Or Nothing" (The Small Faces), Bobby Graham on "You Really Got Me" (The Kinks), Johnny Barbata on "She's My Girl" (The Turtles), Dino Danelli on "You Better Run" (Rascals), and Greg Errico on "Life" (Sly & The Family Stone).

What are some of your favorite grooves that *you've* recorded?
The Smithereens' "Blood And Roses," "Spellbound," "Miles From Nowhere," and "Try," Bill Lloyd's "Doctor Robert's Second Opinion," Chris Von Sneidern's "Sun," Sleeping Giant's "Tell All The Fools," and The Minus 5's "Got You."

What do you like to hear in your headphone mix live and when you record?
Basically a little bit of everything, both live and in the studio. Vocals and rhythm guitar are important. In the studio I like to keep my left headphone slightly off the ear to hear the hi-hat rhythm.

MARTINA AXEN
(DRAIN STH)

What are some of your favorite grooves?
John Bonham on "Kashmir." Led Zeppelin is probably my favorite, not only because of the beats he played, but also because of his *sound.*

What are some of your favorite grooves that *you've* recorded?
On our first album, *Horror Wrestling,* we used a lot of odd meters. I like the song "Stench" a lot because it was so off, but I tried to give it an even flow and make it not stumble.

What records and/or books did you study when you first started playing?
I played along to records with a pair of headphones—AC/DC and whatever I liked at the time. Then, after three months, I started playing in a band. I was seventeen and horrible, but it was the best schooling ever to play with people who were better than I was. I had to learn fast so I wouldn't be fired.

What ride cymbal are you using at the moment?
I use a Paiste 24" with a really big bell. It's a very powerful cymbal.

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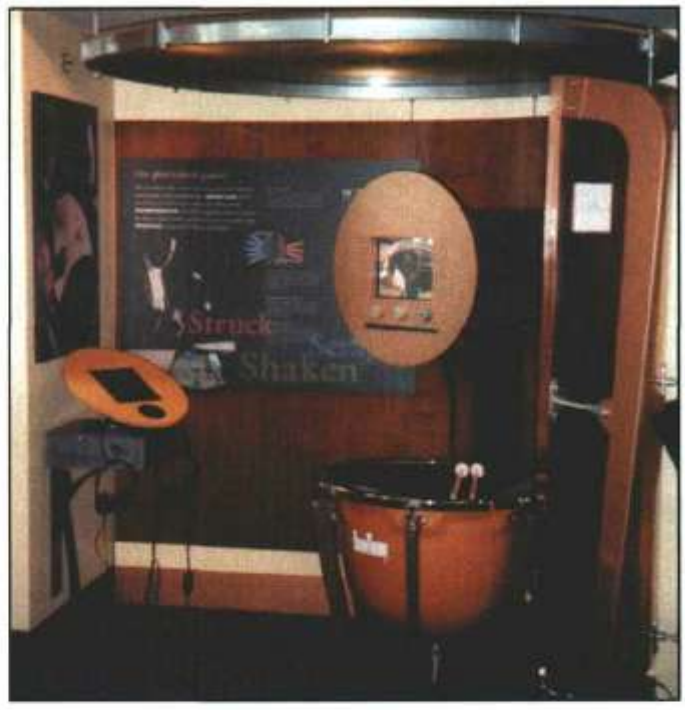

The beauty of an orchestral performance can inspire people to dream of making music of their own. The trick lies in finding an opportunity. It's easy for kids to pick up baseball bats, computers, and other curiosities that can lead to lifelong passions. But where can the average kid get his hands on a timpani?

In Seattle, the answer is Soundbridge, a 2,000-square-foot interactive learning center created by the Seattle Symphony. Upon the center's opening this past April, visitors were greeted with an extensive display of Yamaha brass, woodwind, and percussion instruments to see, hear, and touch.

The highlight of the collection is a model TP4123 Concert Series timpani, which visitors can play. Thanks to a special metal-mesh drumhead and electronic pickup system installed by Seattle-based electronic/acoustic percussion company Boom Theory, the sound of the drum registers through headphones, but not out loud. This keeps the interactive exhibit from disturbing other patrons at multimedia kiosks nearby.

Soundbridge is open to the public from 10 A.M. to 6 P.M. Tuesday through Sunday, and to Seattle Symphony concert ticketholders until concert start time. For more information, phone the Seattle Symphony at (206) 215-4782 or visit www.seattlesymphony.org on the Web.

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In Memoriam

Brian Zsupnik

Veteran touring and studio drummer Brian Zsupnik died on April 12, 2001 at Saint Joseph's Hospital in Burbank, California, following a lengthy battle with lung cancer. He was forty-seven.

Though perhaps not a household name among drummers, Brian was in constant demand by a wide variety of musicians and composers. His drumming graced TV and film projects, pop recordings, concert tours, Broadway-style shows, and local gigs with some of LA's best jazz musicians. His credits include work with Peter Cetera, Bill Medley, Amy Grant, Boz Scaggs, Michael McDonald, Don Henley, Dave Mason, and Stevie Nicks. He also did electronic drum preparation and programming for tours and recordings by Madonna, Chick Corea, Toto, Chicago, and Hole, and for such drummers as "JR" Robinson, David Garibaldi, Omar Hakim, Gregg Bissonette, and Tris Imboden. Brian's TV credits include appearances on every major-network late-night and morning show, along with such specials as the American Music Awards, Golden Globe Awards, American Bandstand 40th Anniversary, and Daytime Emmy Awards.

In a *Different View* article in *MD* conducted before Brian's passing, singer/composer Michael McDonald said, "Brian's one of those guys, like Jeff Porcaro, who's great to have on a session. He really knows how to listen, and he comes up with some great grooves and ideas." Friend and colleague Phil Bloch adds, "Brian's sense of timing and his musicality were impeccable. He gladly accepted every gig as another chance to hone his considerable skills and also to help create the perfect musical setting for the occasion. And his supportive personality made everyone at the session or gig feel relaxed and comfortable. He was, in every sense of the word, a consummate professional."

Brian leaves behind his wife, Cathy, and his son, Jeremy. Contributions in Brian's name can be made to the American Cancer Society. (www2.cancer.org/donate/index.cfm?sc=1). There is also a fund for direct donations to his family at: Brian Zsupnik/Account #28736, Burbank Federal Credit Union, 3000 West Magnolia Blvd., PO Box 7767, Burbank, CA 91510-7767, (818) 238-2900.

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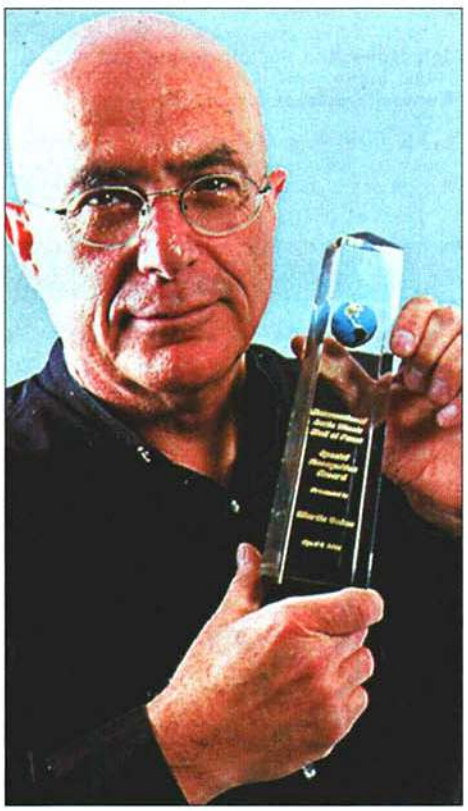
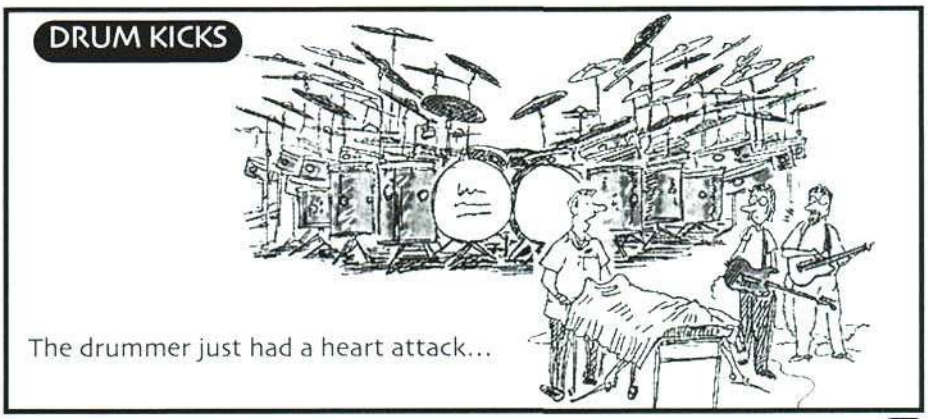
LP Founder Recognized

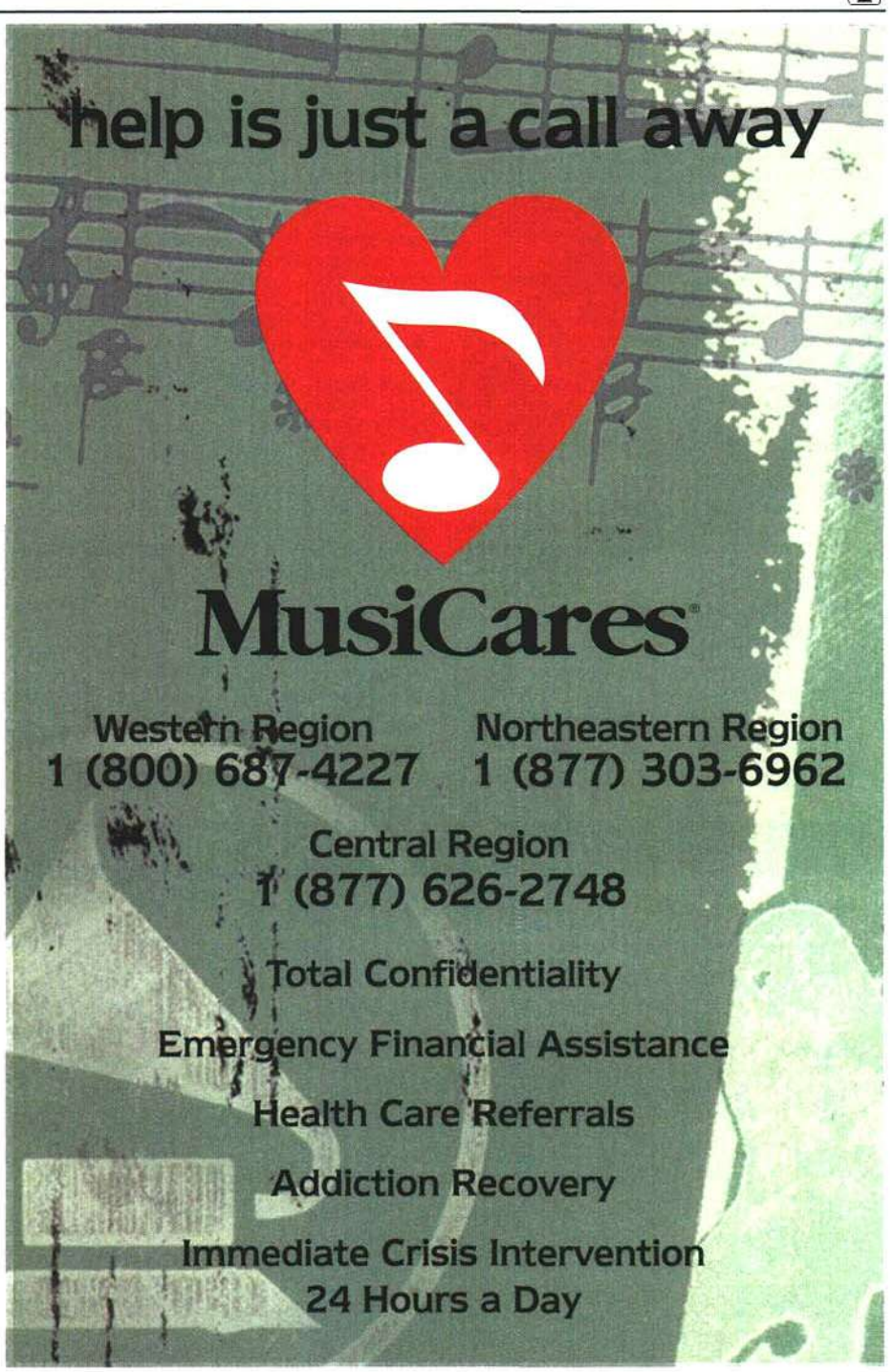
The International Latin Music Hall Of Fame presented Martin Cohen, chairman and founder of Latin Percussion (LP Music Group), with a Special Recognition Award on April 4. The award is presented to individuals who have contributed to and supported the growth of Latin music around the world. Cohen was recognized for contributions spanning more than four decades. The event took place at the Hostos Center For The Arts & Culture in The Bronx, New York.

Joe Hernandez, president of the ILMHOF, commented, "Martin Cohen's efforts have put high-quality Latin percussion instruments into the hands of people around the world. We recognize the fact that he put percussion 'on the map' with regard to Latin music instruments produced on a large scale."

Noted artists recognized at the event included pioneering congueros Carlos "Patato" Valdez, Armando Peraza, and Candido Camero, with whom Martin Cohen has worked closely throughout his career.







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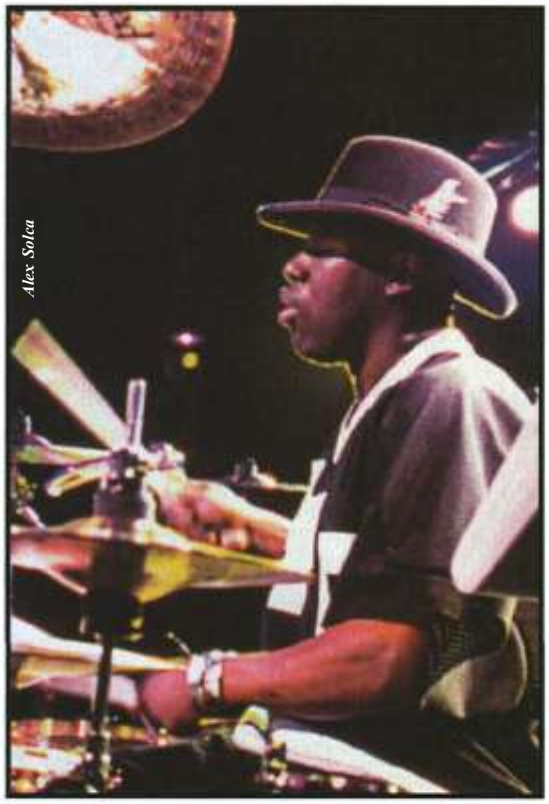

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Todd Morris is the co-founder, producer, and drummer for Seattle-based Afro-fusion group Maya Soleil. "My live and studio performances require parts usually accomplished by two players," says Todd. "I was heavily influenced by the early '70s jazz/funk scene, and now I'm just as heavily into world percussion." In an effort to combine his playing requirements with his musical influences, Todd has created this multi-faceted percussion battery.

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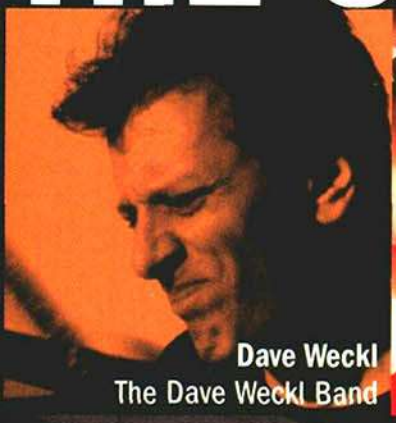

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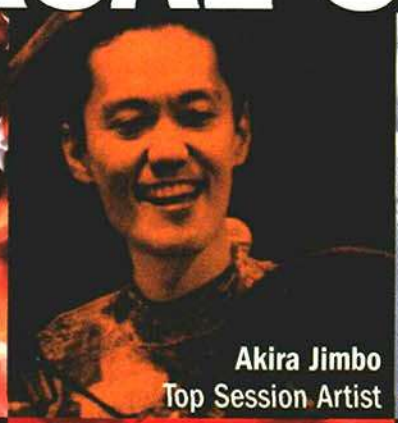

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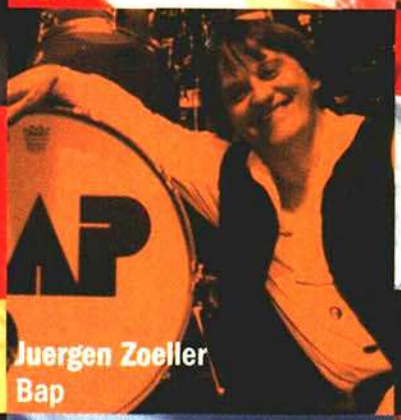

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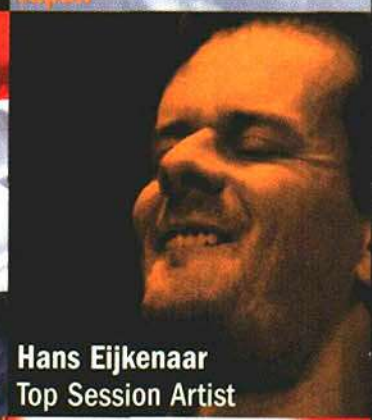

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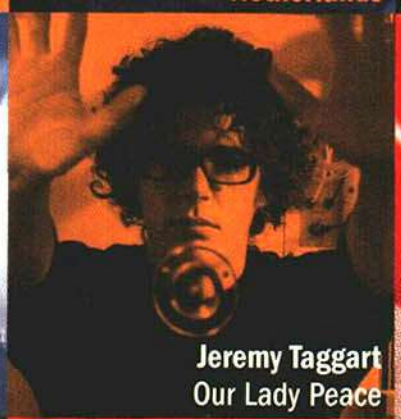

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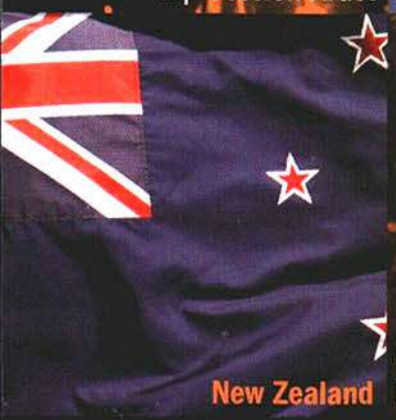
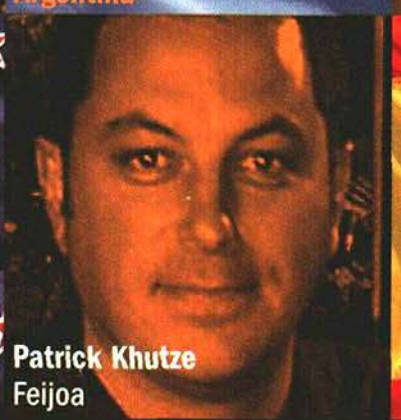
Our Lady Peace

Canada

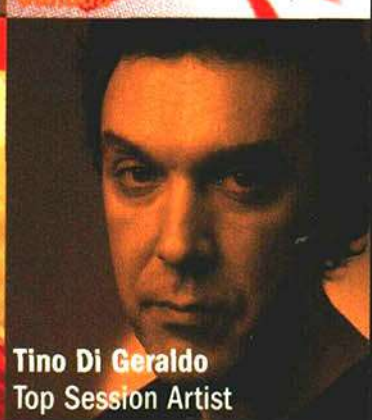


New Zealand



Patrick Khutze
Feijoa

Spain



Tino Di Geraldo
Top Session Artist

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